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AN ESSAY ON THE OPERA

WRITTEN IN ITALIAN

BY COUNT ALGAROTTI K

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BY COUNT ALBERTI

F. R. S. A.



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C. RIVERS, M.D. CCCCXV

TO WILLIAM PITT
FRANCESCO ALGAROTTI

That to you, immortal man, who knew how to rekindle in your nation, her native valor, to provide for her perpetual defence, and caused her to triumph, in one year, in the four quarters of the globe, a treatise on Poetry, Music, and Theatrical Subjects, should be addressed, will to some appear strange.

But, these, it should seem, are not apprized, that the restorer of England, the Friend of the Great FREDERIC, knows also to invigorate

his leisure with the powers of literature ; and that that victorious eloquence, with which he thunders in the senate, proceeds not less from the elevation of his mind, than from his studies in Tully and Demosthenes, his predecessors.

May this treatise even find place in the leisure of such a man, and obtain the suffrage of one, who, in the highest offices of the state, has deserved the admiration and applause of all Europe !

Pisa, dec. 18, 1762.

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AN ESSAY ON OPERAS.

INTRODUCTION.

No method more effectual hath been imagined by human invention, to afford a delightful entertainment to ingenuous minds, than that all accomplished and harmonious performance, by way of excellence, called OPERA; because in forming it no article was forgotten, no means omitted, no ingredient left unemployed, that could in any shape contribute to so important an end: and indeed, it may with reason be affirmed, that the most powerful charms of music, of the mimic art, of dancing, and of painting, are in operatical performances all happily combined, that they may conspire in a friendly manner to refine our sentiments, to soothe the heart, and subdue the stubbornness of reason, that cannot

help surrendering itself a willing captive to so pleasing a fascination.

But, from the very concurrence of so many requisites, it happens in like manner to the Opera, as it does to the most complicated machines, to be thence liable to frequent failures and being out of order. Not indeed, should it be a cause of surprize to us, if so ingenious a composition, and resulting from the combination of so many parts as an Opera does, should not always answer the end proposed ; although no care, pains or study, to attain perfection, had been omitted by those, to whom the preparation of such an entertainment was intrusted.

It must however be confessed, that the persons, who now-a-days take upon them the guidance of those public diversions, do neither enter into a due consideration of particulars, nor pay a proper attention to the several necessary constituents for making an Opera perfect : nay, upon examination, they will be found remiss in chusing the subject of their dramas, and still more negligent about the

words thereof being congenially adapted for the music that is to accompany them. These gentlemen appear to be entirely careless of verisimilitude in the singing and recitative parts, as well as about the connection that ought to subsist between the intervening ballets executed by the dancers, and the main business of the drama. The former should seem to spring genuinely from the latter. They are equally regardless of appropriated decorations in the scenery department; and the faulty structure of their theatres, hitherto hath quite escaped their notice. What wonder then, if that species of dramatic representation, which, from its nature, ought to prove the most delightful of all scenic entertainments, hath degenerated to such a degree of insipidity and irksomeness to spectators in general.

Through a defect of that harmony, which should always prevail among the several parts of which an Opera is composed, there now hardly remains even a faint shadow of that true imitation and agreeable illusion, which

can only result from a perfect consonance among them. By such neglects hath the Opera (originally one of the most ingenious combinations the human mind could pride itself for) dwindled into a languid, badly connected, improbable, grotesque, and monstrous aggregate; wherefore, it has too justly incurred the evil fame that was spread against it, and the stigmatizing censures of many respectable personages, who otherwise very judiciously considered innocent amusements, when tastefully directed, as matters of no small moment, or indifference, to a well regulated government*.

* Among the many unfavourable opinions against OPERAS, which may be cited, is the following from an eminent English writer, and runs thus. — “As the waters of a certain fountain of Thessaly, from their benumbing quality, could be contained in nothing but the hoof of an ass; so can this languid and disjointed composition [the Opera] find no admittance, but in such heads as are expressly formed to receive it.” *THE WORLD*, No. 156. — A long time prior to this censure had the judicious Addison applied for motto to the fifth number of the first volume of the *Spectator*, (where he treats of the Italian Opera) this verse from Horace,

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici.

And

But, to restore the Opera to its pristine dignity and estimation, is, in my sense, an undertaking, now as necessary to be attempted, as it may prove difficult to be carried into execution. The attempt I propose here, is to reduce the musical province into a proper regulation, and to make the performers learn a due obedience to discipline and authority. For how is it to be expected that a drama, although written in ever so masterly a manner, can be exhibited with the requisite propriety, if the judgment of those, who ought to preside, should be disregarded. Nay more, how can we harbour even the least hope of enjoying the laudable composition of a drama, if those persons, who by their situation should listen to and obey the directions of their superiors in sense, notwithstanding their disqualification, arrogate to themselves the power of

And before him Dryden had said,

For what a song, or senseless Opera,
Is to the living labour of a play;
Or what a play to Virgil's work would be,
Such is a single piece to history.

dictating and issuing their mandates. In fine, how can we propose to ourselves, that any good effect should result from the disorderliness of a mutinous band of people, so obstinately averse from filling those stations in an Opera, to which their nature had best adapted them. What frequent acts of flight and misbehaviour are observable towards the musical composer, and still more so towards the poet, who, from the right reason of things, ought to superintend the whole, and act as chief pilot to steer their vessel to the harbour of success.

What frequent jealousies and wranglings arise among the singers, on account of one person's having more ariettas than another, a loftier plume, a longer and more flowing robe, &c. all which frivolous disputes are often more perplexing to be settled than the ceremonial to be observed at a congress, or the precedence of embassadors from different courts.

The first step then necessary to be taken, in order to remove such abuses, is, that the poet should resume the reins of power, which

have been so unjustly wrested from his hands ; and that, being restored to his rightful authority, he may diffuse through every department good order and due subordination.

What legislator would take upon him to give new laws to a people, whirled about in the confusion of anarchy, until such time as their natural magistrates were replaced on their tribunals, and homage paid to their power. What general would march to attack an enemy, if he had not previously banished disorder and licentiousness from his army ?

Where shall we now find a man qualified to undertake the direction of an Opera ? In former times, an edile, or an archon did not think it beneath his rank to preside over theatrical exhibitions ; and then each article was conducted with a suitable decorum ; but more especially whenever the most celebrated of the antient republics made a political use of scenic representations to arouse their citizens to a sense of glory, or to keep them peaceably diverted for the general quiet of the commonwealth.

But now-a-days, the fallen theatre, alas, groans under the mismanagement of mercenary and interested undertakers, whose only object is to raise pecuniary contributions on the curiosity and leisure of their fellow-citizens, they being for the most part totally unfit for such an employment, through their gross ignorance of the several views proper to be conceived, or of the executive means to which they should have recourse, in order that the desired effect may be obtained.

It is therefore necessary, that an entire change in the manner of proceeding, and a thorough reformation of those habitual errors be made; that a salutary doctrine, agreeable to the wishes of taste, may be adopted. Yet so praise-worthy a revolution can hardly be hoped for, but under the patronage of a sovereign, whose court affords a fostering asylum to the muses; because there no man will dare to offer himself to be the director of such an entertainment, but one duly qualified, and whose disposition to excel will go

hand in hand with the means that shall be furnished to him. Under such a guidance, and never otherwise, shall we see the performers reduced to proper order and discipline ; or we, in consequence, become spectators of dramatic compositions, not inferior to those exhibited at Athens and Rome, in the times of a Cæsar and a Pericles.



C H A P. I.

OF THE PLOTTING, ARGUMENT, OR BUSINESS
OF AN OPERA.

As soon as the desired regulation shall have been introduced on the theatre, it will then be incumbent to proceed to the various constituent parts of an Opera, in order that those amendments should be made in each, whereof they severally now appear the most deficient. The leading object to be maturely considered, is the nature of the subject to be chosen; an article of much more consequence, than is commonly imagined; for the success or failure of the drama depends, in a great measure, on a good or bad choice of the subject. It is here of no less consequence, than, in architecture, the plan is to an edifice; or the canvas, in painting, is to a picture; because, thereon the poet draws the outlines of his intended representation, and its colouring is the task of the musical composer. It is therefore the poet's duty, as chief engineer of the un-

dertaking, to give directions to the dancers, the machinists, the painters; nay, down even to those who are entrusted with the care of the wardrobe, and dressing the performers. The poet is to carry in his mind a comprehensive view of the *whole* of the drama; because those parts, which are not the productions of his pen, ought to flow from the dictates of his actuating judgment which is to give being and movement to the whole.

At the first institution of Operas, the poets imagined the heathen mythology to be the best source from which they could derive subjects for their dramas. Hence Daphne, Euridice, Ariana, were made choice of by Octavius Rinuccini, and are looked upon as the eldest musical dramas; having been exhibited about the beginning of the last century. There was besides Poliziano's Orpheus, which also had been represented with instrumental accompaniments; as well as another performance that was no more than a medley of dancing and music, contrived by Bergonzo Rolla, for the entertainment of a duke of

Milan, in the city of Tortona. A particular species of drama was exhibited at Venice for the amusement of Henry the Third; it had been set to music by the famous Zarlino, — Add to these, some other performances, which ought only to be considered, as so many rough sketches and preludes to a complete Opera.

The intent of our poets, was to revive the Greek tragedy in all its lustre, and to introduce Melpomene on our stage, attended by music, dancing, and all that imperial pomp, with which, at the brilliant periods of a Sophocles and Euripides, she was wont to be escorted. And that such splendid pageantry might appear to be the genuine right of tragedy, the poets had recourse for their subjects to the heroic ages, and heathen mythology. From that fountain, the bard, according to his inventive pleasure, introduced on the theatre all the deities of paganism; now shifting his scene to Olympus, now fixing it in the Elysian shades, now plunging it down to Tartarus, with as much ease as if to Argos

or to Thebes. And thus by the intervention of superiour beings, he gave an air of probability to most surprizing and wonderful events. Every circumstance being thus elevated above the sphere of mortal existence, it necessarily followed, that the singing of actors in an Opera, appeared a true imitation of the language made use of by the deities they represented. ✓

This then was the original cause, why in the first dramas that had been exhibited in the courts of sovereigns, or the palaces of princes, in order to celebrate their nuptials, such expensive machinery was employed ; not an article was omitted that could exhibit an idea of whatever is most wonderful to be seen either on earth, or in the heavens. — To superadd a greater diversity, and thereby give a new animation to the whole, a crowded chorus of singers were admitted, as well as dances of various contrivance, with a special attention that the execution of the ballet should coincide, and be combined with the choral song : all which pleasing effects were made

to spring naturally from the subject of the drama.

No doubt then can remain of the exquisite delight that such magic representations must have given to an enraptured assembly ; for although it consisted but of a single subject, it nevertheless displayed an almost infinite variety of entertainment. There is even now frequent opportunity of seeing on the French musical theatre, a spirited likeness to what is here advanced ; because the Opera was first introduced in Paris by cardinal Mazarine, whither it carried the same magnificent apparatus with which it had made its appearance at his time in Italy.

These representations must, however, have afterwards suffered not a little by the intermixture of buffoon characters, which are such ill-suited companions to the dignity of heroes and of Gods ; for by making the spectators laugh out of season, they disconcert the solemnity of the piece. Some traces of this theatric impropriety, are even now observable in the eldest of the French musical dramas.

The Opera did not long remain confined in the courts of sovereigns, and palaces of princes, but emancipating itself from such thralldom, display'd its charms on public theatres, to which the curious of all ranks were admitted, for pay. But in this situation, as must obviously occur to whoever reflects, it was impossible that the pomp and splendour which was attendant on this entertainment from its origin, could be continued. The falling off in that article, was occasioned principally by the exorbitant salaries the singers insisted on, which had been but inconsiderable at the first outset of the musical drama; as for instance, a certain female singer was called *La Centoventi*, *The Hundred-and-Twenty*, for having received so many crowns, for her performance during a single carnival. A sum which hath been amazingly exceeded since, almost beyond all bounds.

Hence arose the necessity for opera-directors to change their measures, and to be as frugally economical on one hand, as they found themselves unavoidably profuse on the

other. Through such saving, the Opera may be said to have fallen from heaven upon the earth, and being divorced from an intercourse with gods, to have humbly resigned itself to that of mortals.

Thence forward prevailed a general renunciation of all subjects to be found in the fabulous accounts of the heathen deities, and none were made choice of, but those derived from the histories of humble mankind, because less magnificent in their nature, and therefore less liable to large disbursements for their exhibition.

The directors, obliged to circumspection, for their own safety, were induced to imagine they might supply the place of all that costly pomp and splendid variety of decoration, to which the dazzled spectators had been accustomed so long, by introducing a chaster regularity into their drama, seconded by the auxiliary charms of a more poetical diction, as well as by the concurring powers of a more exquisite musical composition. This project gained ground the faster from the public's ob-

serving, that one of these arts was entirely employed in modelling itself on our ancient authors; and the other, solely intent on enriching itself with new ornaments; which made Operas to be looked upon by many, as having nearly reached the pinnacle of perfection. However, that these representations might not appear too naked and uniform, interludes and ballets, to amuse the audience, were introduced between the acts; and thus, by degrees, the opera took that form, which is now practised on our theatres.

It is an uncontrovertible fact, that subjects for an operatical drama, whether taken from pagan mythology or historians, have inevitable inconveniencies annexed to them. The fabulous subjects, on account of the great number of machines, and magnificent apparatus, which they require, often distress the poet into limits too narrow for him, to carry on and unravel his plot with propriety; because he is not allowed either sufficient time or space to display the passions of each character, so absolutely necessary to the completing of

an opera, which, in the main, is nothing more than a tragic-poem recited to musical sounds; and from the inconvenience alluded to here, it has happened that a great number of the French Operas, as well as the first of the Italian are nothing better than entertainments for the eye; having more the appearance of a masquerade than of a regular dramatic performance: because therein the principal action is whelmed, as it were, under a heap of accessaries; and the poetical part being so flimsy and wretched, it was, with just reason, called a string of madrigals.

On the other hand, the subjects taken from history, are liable to the objection of their not being so well adapted to music, which seems to exclude them from all plea of probability. This impleaded error may be observed every day upon the Italian stage. For who can be brought to think, that the trillings of an air flow so justifiably from the mouth of a Julius Cæsar or a Cato, as from the lips of Venus or Apollo? Moreover, historical subjects do not furnish so striking a variety, as those that

are fabulous ; they are apt to be too austere and monotonous. The stage, in such representations, would for ever exhibit an almost solitary scene, unless we are willing to number among the ranks of actors, the mob of attendants that crowd after sovereigns, even into their closets. Besides, it is no easy matter to contrive ballets or interludes suitable to subjects taken from history ; because all such entertainments ought to form a kind of social union, and become, as it were, constituent parts of the whole. Such, for example, on the French stage, is "The Ballet of the Shepherds," that celebrates the marriage of Medoro with Angelica, and makes Orlando acquainted with his accumulated wretchedness. But this is far from being the effect of entertainments obtruded into the Italian Operas ; in which, although the subject be Roman, and the ballet consist of dancers dressed like Roman soldiers, yet so unconnected is it with the business of the drama, that the scuzzese or furlana might as well be danced. And this is

the reason why subjects chosen from history, are for the most part necessitated to appear naked, or to make use of such alien accoutrements as neither belong, nor are by any means suitable to them.

In order to obviate such inconveniencies, the only means left to the poet is, to exert all his judgment and taste in chusing the subject of his drama, that thereby he may attain his end, which is to delight the eyes and the ears, to rouse up, and to affect the hearts of an audience, without the risk of sinning against reason or common sense: wherefore, the most prudent method he can adopt, will be to make choice of an event that has happened either in very remote times, or in countries very distant from us, and quite estranged from our usages, which may afford various incidents of the marvellous, notwithstanding that the subject, at the same time, be extremely simple and not unknown: two desirable requisites.

The great distance of place where the action is fixed, will prevent the recital of it to mu-

tical sounds, from appearing quite so improbable to us. The marvellousness of the theme, will furnish the author with an opportunity of interweaving therewith dances, chorusses, and a variety of scenical decorations. The simplicity and notoriety of it will exempt his muse from the perplexing trouble and tedious preparations necessary to make the personages of a drama known, that, suitable to his notification, may be displayed their passions, the main spring and actuating spirit of the stage.

The two Operas of Dido, and of Achilles in Sciros, written by the celebrated Metastasio, come very near to the mark proposed here. The subjects of these dramatic poems are simple, and taken from very remote antiquity, but without being too far fetched. In the midst of their most impassioned scenes, there is an opportunity of introducing splendid banquets, magnificent embassies, embarkations, chorusses, battles, conflagrations, &c. so as to give a farther extension to the sovereignty of the musical drama, and make

its rightfulness be more ascertained than has been hitherto allowed.

The same doctrine may be advanced in regard to an Opera on the subject of Montezuma, as much on account of the greatness, as of the novelty of such an action, as that emperor's catastrophe must afford. A display of the Mexican and Spanish customs, seen for a first time together, must form a most beautiful contrast; and the barbaric magnificence of America, would receive various heightenings by being opposed in different views to that of Europe*.

Several subjects may likewise be taken from Ariosto and Tasso, equally fitting as Montezuma, for the opera-theatre; for, besides these being so universally known, they would furnish not only a fine field for exercising the passions, but also for introducing all the surprising illusions of the magic art.

An Opera of Æneas in Troy, or of Iphige-

* Montezuma has been chosen for the subject of an Opera performed with the greatest magnificence at the theatre royal of Berlin.

nia in Aulis, would answer the same purpose; and to the great variety for scenes and machinery, still greater heighthenings might be derived from the enchanting *poetry* of Virgil and Euripides.

There are many other subjects to the full as applicable to the stage, and that may be found equally fraught with marvellous incidents. Let then a poet, who is judicious enough, make a prudent collection of the subjects truly dramatic, that are, to be found in tracing the fabulous accounts of the heathen gods, and do the same also in regard to more modern times. Such a proceeding relative to the Opera, would not be unlike to what is oft-times found necessary in states, which it is impossible to preserve from decay, and in the unimpaired enjoyment of constitutional vigour, without making them revert from time to time to their original principles.

CHAP. II.

ON THE MUSICAL COMPOSITION FOR OPERAS.

No art now appears to stand so much in need of having the conclusive maxim of the preceding chapter put in practice, as that of music; so greatly has it degenerated from its former dignity. For by laying aside every regard to decorum, and by scorning to keep within the bounds prescribed, it has suffered itself to be led far, very far astray, in a bewildered pursuit of new-fangled whimsies and capricious conceits. Wherefore, it would be now very seasonable to revive the decree made by the Lacedemonians, against that man, who, through a distempered passion for novelty, had so sophisticated their music with his crotchetty innovations, that, from noble and manly, he rendered it effeminate and disgusting.

Mankind in general, it must be owned, are actuated by a love of novelty; and it is as true that without it, music, like every other art, could not have received the great improvements it has. What we here implead, is not a chaste passion for novelty, but a too great fondness for it; because it was that which reduced music to the declining state so much lamented by all true connoisseurs. While arts are in their infancy, the love of novelty is no doubt essential; as it is to that they owe their being; and after, by its kindly influence, are improved, matured, and brought to perfection; but that point being once attained, the indulging this passion too far, will, from benign and vivifying, become noxious and fatal. The arts have experienced this vicissitude, in almost every nation where they have appeared; as, among the Italians, hath music at this time in a more remarkable manner.

On its revival in Italy, though in very barbarous times, this elegant art soon made its power be known throughout Europe; nay

more, it was cultivated to such a degree by the tramontane nations, that it may, without exaggeration, be asserted, the Italians themselves were, for a certain period of time, glad to receive instructions from them.

On the return of music to Venice, Rome, Bologna, and Naples, as to its native place, such considerable improvements were made there in the musical art, during the two last centuries, that foreigners, in their turn, repaired thither for instruction: and such would be now the case, were they not deterred from so doing by the raging phrenzy after novelty, that prevails in all the Italian schools. For, as if music were yet unrudimented, and in its infancy, the mistaken professors spare no pains to trick out their art with every species of grotesque imagination and fantastical combination, which they think can be executed by sounds. The public too, as if they were likewise in a state of childhood, change almost every moment their notions of, and fondness for things, rejecting to-day with scorn, what yesterday was so pas-

fionately admired. The taste in singing, which, some years ago, enraptured audiences hung upon with wonder and delight, is now received with a supercilious disapprobation; not because it is sunk in real merit, but for the very groundless reason of its being old, and not in frequent use. And thus we see, that in compositions instituted for the representation of nature, whose mode is ever one, there is the same desire of changing, as in the fluctuating fashions of the dresses we wear.

Another principal reason, that can be assigned for the present degeneracy of music, is the authority, power and supreme command usurped in its name; because the composer, in consequence, acts like a despotic sovereign, contracting all the views of pleasing to his department alone. It is almost impossible to persuade him, that he ought to be in a subordinate station; that music derives its greatest merit from being no more than an auxiliary, the handmaid to poetry. His chief business then is to pre-dispose the minds of the audience for receiving the impression to be ex-

cited by the poet's verse ; to infuse such a general tendency in their affections, as to make them analogous with those particular ideas, which the poet means to inspire. In fine, its genuine office is to communicate a more animating energy to the language of the muses.

That old and just charge, enforced by critics against operatical performances, of making their heroes and heroines die *singing*, can be ascribed to no other cause but the defect of a proper harmony between the words and the music. Were all ridiculous quavering omitted when the serious passions are to speak, and were the musical composition judiciously adapted to them, then it would not appear more improbable that a person should die singing, than reciting, verses.

It is an undeniable fact, that, in the earliest ages, the poets were all musical proficient ; the vocal part, then, ranked as it should, which was to render the thoughts of the mind, and affections of the heart, with more forcible, more lively, and more kindling expres-

sion. But now that the two twin-sisters, poetry and music, go no longer hand in hand, it is not at all surprising, if the business of the one is to add colouring to what the other has designed, that the colouring, separately considered, appear beautiful ; yet, upon a nice examination of the whole, the contours offend, by not being properly rounded, and by the absence of a social blending of the parts throughout. Nor can a remedy be applied to so great an evil, otherwise but by the modest discretion of a composer, who will not think it beneath him to receive from the poet's mouth the purport of his meaning and intention, who will also make himself a competent master of the author's sense, before he writes a note of music, and will ever afterwards confer with him concerning the music he shall have composed; and by thus proceeding, keep up such a dependence and friendly intercourse, as subsisted between Lulli and Quinault, Vinci and Metastasio, which indeed the true regulation of an operatical theatre requires.

Among the errors observable in the present system of music the most obvious, and that which first strikes the ears, at the very opening of an Opera, is the hackneyed manner of composing overtures, which are always made to consist of two allegros with one grave, and to be as noisy as possible. Thus are they void of variation, and so jog on much alike. Yet, what a wide difference ought to be perceived between one overture and another; between that, for example, which precedes the death of Dido, and that which is prefixed to the nuptials of Demetrius and Cleonice. The main drift of an overture should be to announce, in a certain manner, the business of the drama, and consequently prepare the audience to receive those affecting impressions, that are to result from the whole of the performance; so that from hence a leading view, and presaging notions of it may be conceived, as is of an oration from the exordium. But our present composers look upon an overture as an article quite detached and absolutely different

from the poet's drama. They use it as an opportunity of playing off a tempestuous music to stun the ears of an audience. If some, however, employ it as an exordium, it is of a kindred complexion to those of certain writers, who with big and pompous words, repeatedly display before us the loftiness of the subject and the lowness of their genius; which preluding would suit any other subject as well, and might as judiciously be prefixed for an exordium to one oration as another.

After the overture, the next article that presents itself to our consideration is the recitative; and as it is wont to be the most noisy part of an Opera, so is it the least attended to, and the most neglected. It seems as if our musical composers were of opinion, that the recitative is not of consequence enough to deserve their attention, they deeming it incapable of exciting any great delight. But the antient masters thought in a quite different manner. There needs no stronger proof than to read what Jacopo Peri, who

may be justly called the inventor of the recitative, wrote in his preface to Euridice. When he had applied himself to an investigation of that species of musical imitation, which would the readiest lend itself to theatric exhibitions, he directed his tasteful researches to discover the manner which had been employed by the antient Greeks on similar occasions. He carefully observed the Italian words, which are capable of intonation, or consonance, and those which are not. He was very exact in minuting down our several modes of pronunciation, as well as the different accents of grief, of joy, and of all the other affections incident to the human frame; and that, in order to make the base move a timing attendance to them, now with more energy, now with less, according to the nature of each. So nicely scrupulous was he in his course of vocal experiments, that he scrutinized intimately the very genius of the Italian language; on which account, in order to be more accurate, he frequently consulted

with several gentlemen, not less remarkable for the delicacy of their ears, than for their being uncommonly skilled both in the arts of music and poetry.

The final conclusion of his ingenious enquiry was, that the ground-work of all such imitation should be an harmony, chastely following nature step by step; a something between common speaking and melody; a well-combined system between that kind of performance which the antients called the *diastematica* *, as if held in, and suspended; and the other, called the *continuata* *. Such were the studies of the musical composers in former times. They proceeded in the improvement of their art with the utmost care and attention; and the effect proved, that they did not lose their time in the pursuit of unprofitable subtleties.

The recitative in their time was made to vary with the subject, and assume a complexion suitable to the spirit of the words. It some-

* See the glossary of technical terms at the end.

times moved with a rapidity equal to that of the text ; and at others with an attendant slowness : but never failed to mark, in a conspicuous manner, those inflexions and sallies, which the violence of our passions can transfuse into the expression of them. All musical compositions, finished in so masterly a manner, were heard with delight. Numbers now living must remember how certain passages of simple recitative have affected the minds of an audience, to a degree, that no modern air is able to produce.

However, the recitative, all disregarded as it may be, has been known to excite emotions in an audience, when it was of the *obligato* kind, as the artists term it ; that is, when strictly accompanied with instruments. Perhaps it would not be improper to employ it oftener than is now the custom. What a kindling warmth might be communicated to the recitative, if, where a passion exerts itself, it were to be enforced by the united orchestra ! By so doing, the heart and mind at once would be

formed, as it were, by all the powers of music. A more evincing instance of such an effect cannot be quoted, than the greater part of the last act of *Didone*, set to music by Vinci, which is executed in the taste recommended here : and no doubt but Virgil's self would be pleased to hear a composition so animating and so terrible.

Another good purpose, which must be derived from such a practice is, that, then, would not appear to us so enormous, the great variety and disproportion now observable in the *andamento* of the recitative, and that of the airs; but, on the contrary, a more friendly agreement among the several parts of an Opera would be the result. The connoisseurs have been often displeased with those sudden transitions, where, from a recitative in the *andantissimo* and gentlest movement, the performers are made to skip off and bound away into *ariettas* of the briskest execution; which is to the full as absurd, as if a person, when soberly walking, should all on the sudden set to leaping and capering.

The surest method to bring about a better understanding among the several constituent parts of an Opera, would be not to crowd so much art into the airs, and to curb the instrumental part more than is now the custom. In every period of the Opera these two formed the most brilliant parts of it: and, in proportion as the musical composition has been more and more refined, so have they received still greater heightenings. They were naked formerly in comparison of what we see them now, and were in as absolute a state of simplicity, as they had been at their origin; insomuch that, either in point of melody or accompaniments, they did not rise above recitative.

Old Scarlatti was the first who infused life, movement, and spirit into them. It was he who cloathed their nakedness with the splendid attire of noble accompaniments; but they were dealt out by him in a sober and judicious manner. They were by no means intricate or obscure, but open and obvious; highly finished, yet free from all the minute-

ness of affectation ; and that not so much on account of the vastness of the theatres, by means of which many of the minor excellencies in musical performances may be lost, as in regard to the voices to which alone they should be made subservient.

But unwarrantable changes have happened since that great master's time down to ours, in which all the bounds of discretion are wantonly overleapt. The airs now are whelmed under, and disfigured, by crowded ornaments, with which unnatural method the rage of novelty labours to embellish them. How tediously prolix are those *ritornelli* that precede them ; nay, and are often superfluous. For, can any thing be more improbable than that, in an air expressive of wrath, an actor should calmly wait with his hand stuck in his sword-belt, until the ritornello be over, to give vent to a passion that is supposed to be boiling in his breast : and after the ritornello, then comes on the part to be sung ; but the multitude of fiddles, &c. that accompany it in general, produce no better an ef-

fect, than to astonish the faculty of hearing, and to drown the voice of a singer? Why is there not more use made of the bassetts, and why not encrease the number of basse-voles, which are the shades of music? Where is the necessity for so many fiddles, with which our orchestras are now throng'd? Fewer would do; for they prove in this case like too many hands on board of a ship, which, instead of being assistant, are a great impediment to its navigation. Why are not lutes and harps allowed a place? with their light and piercing notes they would give a sprightliness to the *ripienos*. Why is the *violetta* excluded from our orchestras, since, from its institution, it was intended to act a middle part between the fiddles and the bassetts, in order that harmony might thence ensue?

But one of the most favourite practices now, and which indeed makes our theatres to resound with peals of applause, is, in an *air*, to form a contest between the voice and a hautboy, or between the voice and a trumpet, so as to exhibit, as it were, a kind of mu-

fical tilting-match with the utmost exertion on either side. But such a skirmishing of voices and instruments are very displeasing to the judicious part of an audience, who, on the contrary, would receive the greatest delight from the airs being accompanied by instruments differently qualified from the present in use, and perhaps even by the organ, as hath been formerly practised *. The consequence then would be, that the respective qualities of instruments would be properly adapted to the nature of the words which they are intended to accompany, and that they would aptly glide into those parts, where a due expression of the passion should stand most in need of them. Then the accompaniment would be of service to the singer's voice, by enforcing the pathetic affections of the song; and would prove not unlike to the numbers of elegant and harmonious prose, which, according to the

* In the *orchestra* of the theatre in the famous city of Cataio, an organ is now to be seen.

maxim of a learned sage, ought to be like the beating on an anvil by smiths, at once both musical, and skilfully laboured.

These faults, however considerable, are not the greatest that have been introduced in the composition of airs; we must go farther back to investigate the first source of this evil, which, in the judgment of the most able professors, is to be found in the misconduct of chusing the subject of an air: because rarely any attention is paid to the andamento of the melody being natural, and corresponding to the sense of the words it is to convey; besides, the extravagant varieties which it is now made to shift and turn about after, cannot be managed to tend to one common centre, or point of unity. For the chief view of our present musical composers is to court, flatter and surprize the ears, but not at all either to affect the heart, or kindle the imagination of those who hear them; wherefore, to accomplish their favourite end, they frequently bound over all rules. To be prodigal of shining passages, to repeat

words without end, and musically to interweave or entangle them as they please, are the three principal methods by which they carry on their operations.

The first of these expedients is indeed big with danger, when we attend to the good effect that is to be expected from melody, because through its middle situation it possesses more of the *virtú*. Moreover, music delights to make a use of acute notes in her compositions similar to that which painting does with striking lights in her performances.

In regard to brilliant passages, common sense forbids the introduction of them, excepting where the words are expressive of passion or movement, otherwise they deserve no milder an appellation, than being so many impertinent interruptions of the musical sense.

The repeating of words and those chiming rencounters that are made for the sake of sound merely, and are devoid of meaning, prove intolerable to a judicious ear. Words are to be treated in no other manner but according as the passion dictates; and when the

sense of an air is finished, the first part of it ought never to be sung over again; which is one of our modern innovations, and quite repugnant to the natural process of our speech and passions, that are not accustomed to thus turn about, and recoil upon themselves.

Most people, who frequent our Italian theatres, must have observed, that even when the sense of an air breathes a roused and furious tendency, yet if the words Father or Son be in the text, the composer never fails to slacken his notes, to give them all the softness he can, and to stop in a moment the impetuosity of the tune. Moreover he flatters himself, on such occasion, that, besides having cloathed the words with sentimental sounds suitable to them, he hath also given to them an additional seasoning of variety.

But in our sense he hath entirely spoiled all with such a dissonance of expression, that will ever be objected to by all who have the least pretensions to judgment and taste. The duty

of a composer is to express the sense, not of this or that particular word, but the comprehensive meaning of all the words in the air. It is also his duty to make variety flow from the several modifications the subject in itself is capable of; and not from adjuncts, that adventitiously fasten themselves thereon, and are foreign from, preposterous, or repugnant to, the poet's intention.

It seems that our composers take the same mistaken pains which some writers do; who, regardless of connection and order in a discourse, bend all their thoughts to collect and string together a number of finely sounding words. But, notwithstanding such words are ever so harmonious, a discourse so written would prove an useless, vain, and contemptible performance. The same may be said of every musical composition, which is not calculated either to express some sentiment, or awaken the idea of some imagery of the mind*. Like what we

* *Toute musique qui ne peint rien, n'est que du bruit, & sans l'habitude, qui denature tout, elle ne seroit gueres plus de plaisir,*

have compared it to, it must turn out but an useless and a vain production, which, should it be received with a temporary and slight applause, must soon be consigned to perpetual silence and oblivion, notwithstanding all the art that might have been employed in chusing the musical combinations. On the contrary, those airs alone remain for ever engraven on the memory of the publick, that paint images to the mind, or express the passions, and are for that reason called the speaking airs, because more congenial to nature; which can never be justly imitated, but by a beautiful simplicity, which will always bear away the palm from the most laboured refinements of art.

Although poetry and music be so near a-kin to each other, yet they have pursued different views here in Italy. The muse presiding

plaisir, qu'une suite de mots harmonieux, & sonores, denués d'ordre, & de l'aisson.

PREF. DE L'ENCYCLOPÉDIE.

All music, that paints nothing, is only noise; and were it not for custom, that unnatures every thing, it would excite no more pleasure than a sequel of harmonious and finely sounding words, without any order or connection.

over harmony, was too chaste in the last century to give into those affectations and languishing airs, which she is at present so fond of indulging. She then knew the way to the human heart, and how to stamp permanent impressions thereon; she possessed the secret of incorporating herself, as it were, with the meaning of the words, and that the probability might seem the greater, she was to the last degree simple, yet affecting; though at the same time, the poetic muse had run away from all semblance of truth, to make a parade of hyperbolical, far-fetched fantastical whimsies. Since that time, by a strange vicissitude, as soon as poetry was made to return into the right path, music ran astray.

Such excellent masters as a Cesti and a Carissimi, had the hard fate of composing music for words, in the style of the Achillino; men, who were equal to the noble task of conveying, in musical numbers, the sighs and love-breathings of a Petrarch. But now, alas, the elegant, the terse, the graceful poems of Metastasio, are degraded into music by

wretched composers. It must not, however, be hence concluded, that no vestige of true music is to be perceived among us ; because, as a proof against such an opinion, and that no small one, may be produced our intermezzi, and comic Operas ; wherein the first of all musical requisites, that of expression, takes the lead more than in any other of our compositions : which is owing perhaps to the impossibility the masters found of indulging their own fancy in a wanton display of all the secrets of their art, and the manifold treasures of musical knowledge ; from which ostentatious prodigality, they were luckily prevented by the very limited abilities of their fingers. Wherefore, in their own despite, they found themselves obliged to cultivate simplicity and follow nature. Whatever may have been the cause, this style soon obtained the vogue, and triumphed over every other, although called plebeian. Why did it succeed ? Because it was fraught with truth, that in all arts and sciences must ultimately prevail.

To this kind of performance, we owe the extending of our musical fame on the other side of the Alps among the French, who had been at all times our rivals in every polite art. The emulous contention which had so long subsisted between them and us, for a pre-eminence in music, is universally known. No means could be hit on by our artists, to make their execution agreeable to Gallic ears; and the Italian melody was abhorred by them, as much as had been in former times, an Italian regency.

But no sooner was heard upon the theatre of Paris, the natural, yet elegant style of the *Serva Padrona*, rich with airs so expressive, and duets so pleasing, than the far greater part of the French became not only proselytes to, but even zealous advocates in behalf of the Italian music. A revolution so sudden, was caused by an intermezzo and two comic actors. The like had been attempted in vain, in the most elaborate pieces of eminent composers, through a long series of years, although bedizened over with so

many brilliant passages, surprizing shakes, &c. nor did the repeated efforts of our most celebrated performers, vocal or instrumental, fare better.

Nevertheless, all the good musical composition modern Italy can boast of, is not absolutely confined to the intermezzi and comic Operas; for it must be confessed, that in some of our late serious pieces, there are parts not unworthy of the best masters, and the most applauded æra of music. Several instances are to be found in the works of Pergolesi and Vinci, whom death too soon snatched from us; as well as in those of Gualupi, Jumelli, Saffone, that are deserving to be for ever in esteem.

Through the energy of the composition of these masters, music makes an audience feel sometimes from the stage, the very same effects that were formerly felt in the chapels under the direction of Palestrina and Rhodio. We have likewise proofs of the like powerful influence in the skilful productions of Benedetto Marcello; a man, second in merit to none among the

ancients, and certainly the first among the moderns. Who ever was more animated with a divine flame in conceiving, and more judicious in conducting his works, than Marcello? In the cantatas of Timoteo, of Cassandra, and of the celebrated Opera of Salmi, he hath expressed in a wonderful manner, not only all the different passions of the heart, but even the most delicate sentiments of the mind. He has, moreover, the art of representing to our fancy, things even inanimate. He found out the secret of associating with all the gracefulness and charms of the modern, the chaste correctness of ancient music, which in him appears like the attractive graces of a beloved and respected matron.

C H A P. III.

ON THE RECITATIVE, AND SINGING,
IN OPERAS.

It is not enough for correct musical composition in order to succeed, that it be attentive to what effect it shall produce, because that depends chiefly on the manner in which it is executed by the fingers. For it may so happen, that a good musical composer, may be a good commander at the head of a bad army, with this difference, that a good commander may make good soldiers, but a skilful composer of music cannot flatter himself to do the like with his fingers. It has never entered into the heads of most of them, how necessary above every other article, it is to learn an accurate pronunciation of their own language, to articulate well, to be intelligible, and not to change, as is too often the case, one word for another. Nothing is more

ungraceful, than their mincing and frittering away the finales, as well as their clipping and mutilating words, lest they should offend their own tender palates; by which means, those who have not the books of the drama open before them, do not receive by their ears, any distinct impression of what is unmeaningly lisped away. It was glancing at this error, that Salvini humorously remarked, "Such acting, which, to be understood, labours under the inconvenience of its drama being read, is not unlike to those pictures, under which it is necessary to write, this is a dog, and this is a horse." To Italy, much better than to France, might be applied the pleasant caricature that was made there, of an Opera without words; as if in an Opera, words were quite superfluous*.

The gait of our actors, their adjustment, their representative deportment, and their manner of moving on the stage, are as ungraceful, as their faulty habit of pronouncing

* The amours of the emperor Caracalla with a vestal, by Le Grand.

words, or expressing sentiments. Being so unqualified, and grossly defective in the first principles of their art, it is not at all to be wondered at, that they never make any progressive advances towards the attainment of those exquisite exertions, without which, there can be neither dignity nor truth in an action. Performers in an Opera, have this advantage over the comic, that their execution is settled and restrained by the notes, as was the custom in the ancient tragedies; and thus have they marked out for them, the path which they are to follow, and therefore they cannot err, in regard to the different inflexions, or duration of the voice upon the words, because all that is carefully directed by the composer. Notwithstanding these boundaries prescribed, an opportunity is always left to an intelligent singer, to throw in a great deal of his own; as in a similar manner, choregraphy, or the art of dancing does; for at the same time that it points out to its performers the times, the steps, and turnings they are to observe in consonance with the notes of the tune they are to be

guided by: there is not room for the least hesitation in asserting, that it is the dancer himself who is to give the finishing hand, and to heighten his execution with those in-born graces, which are the very soul of art.

It is even so with the recitative; for besides the gestures, which entirely depend on the actor, there are certain suspensions of the voice, certain short pauses, and a certain insisting on one place more than on another, that cannot be communicated, and are therefore resigned over to his sagacity and discretion. For it is in such minute refinements, that chiefly consists the delicacy of expression, which impresseth the sense of words, not only on the mind, but on the hearts of all who hear them.

Even at this day, among the French, are remembered excellencies of this nature in the unparalleled acting of their Baron, and Le Couvreur, that gave a heighthening to the verses of Corneille and Racine. Their superior strokes of art are ever kept in view, and most faithfully imitated, in a nation

where the theatre now is, as it was formerly in Athens, no inconsiderable object of the public's attention. It would have been an advantage to the Italian stage, if our performers had also studied Nicolini's and Tesi's manner of recitative, that is, when they kept close to the modesty of nature in expressing her sentiments; but not at all, when, in order to please too much, they indulged a ranting strain, and bordered upon caricature.—The playing, to what an actor says, which may be called the dumb shew of a scene, is likewise another part of dramatic expression that totally depends upon the actor's judgment; and is as conducive to an enforcing of theatrical illusion, as it is necessary that a cause should produce an effect. Every body knows, without my entering into a detail of proofs, how careless and insignificant in this article are, generally speaking, each Roscius that we see. Their thoughts are bent on every thing, but on that to which they should solely attend.

Instead of one actor minding what another says to him, and marking by the different mo-

difications of gesture and features, what impression it has made upon him, he does nothing but smile to the boxes, and bow to the company there, with several other such pretty impertinences.

By so preposterous a conduct, one would think they had come to a resolution not to impose upon any account, or suffer the audience to mistake them for what they really are not; for should one incline to imagine such actors, for a time, to representatively fill the rank of Achilles, Cyrus, &c. on the stage; these dear undeceiving creatures do all in their power to defeat such a pleasing error, and declare themselves as a wag merrily observed, to be no more than the ridiculous signor Petricino, the silly signor Stoppiano, and the zany signor Zolfanello.

This remissness may be assigned, perhaps, among the principal causes of that extreme disgust, that tyrannizing irksomeness, so prevalent at the representation of our Operas; against which, a remedy has been sought in the perpetual chattering of the company, in

visits being made from one box to another, in supping there ; and finally, in that other remedy, which is a thousand times worse than the disease complained of, and that is, gaming. All which irregularities, will never be removed until such time, as, what in reality is the first foundation of musical pieces, shall no longer be held of no value in the opinion of composers, as well as of performers ; that is, when the recitative, the most essential part of the drama, shall be no longer so disfigured or neglected as at present, and when the songs too shall be well acted : then only will Operas be heard with delight, and force their way to the hearts of an audience.

But in spite of all that connoisseurs may say of acting, the modern performers seem determined to attend to singing only ; yet, even in that, they do not observe the restrictions they should ;

E libito fan licito in lor legge,

Knowing no other law but their own will

and pleasure. Pistocco, who may be looked upon as the head of the school, the Marini of modern licence-taking, thus rebuked Bernacchi, "it is very disagreeable to me, that although I have taught you to sing, yet you will do the reverse." It is an old axiom, that he who knows not how to bridle his voice, can never learn to sing; which, indeed, our gentry are very careless about. Though to keep the voice sustained in a certain key, or to raise it to a certain pitch required by the subject, is the great secret of stirring up our affections; yet that they are strangers to, being persuaded on the contrary, that all their skill is to consist in straining and splitting the voice, and in desultory transitions from one note to another. Their object is not to make choice of what will produce the best effect, but of that which they think the most extraordinary and difficult in the execution.

It is not amiss, to be sure, that young singers apply themselves to become masters of the greatest difficulties in musical execution; because, by that means the voice is rendered

more obedient to their command on every occasion, and grows habituated to perform what was deemed beyond its reach, and above its owner's faculties. Moreover, it hence follows, that the person who can execute the most difficult parts, will be certainly qualified to perform what are less so; and through that acquired facility, the graces suitable to the subject, may be the readier joined by such a proficient.

But to be ever on the tiptoes, in straining after difficulties, is against the very intention and spirit of the musical art. It is a monstrous inversion of things, making that the end, which should only be the means.—It is prescribed by all the rules of taste, that the duty of fingers is to sing, not to quaver or trill away the sense, but to be intelligible; for by so doing, it is no fault of theirs, that a musical performance, though it be ever so chaste, so regular and apposite, be dwindled into an unnerved and effeminate composition.

Whether it be that they have never learned, or that they do not like to follow the true

precepts of their art, they apply the same graces to every kind of cantilena ; and what with their passages, their trillings, and besides, with their splittings and flights of the voice, they over do, confound, and disfigure every thing : thus putting, as it were, the same mask on different compositions, they so manage matters, that all tunes appear to resemble each other ; in the same manner, as all the ladies in France, by means of the paint and patches, appear to be of the same family.

There is a great liberty allowed by us to a singer, especially in the cantabile songs, which are composed loosely, and but with a few notes, sufficient to direct the melody, that he may have an opportunity of filling up from himself as he pleases, and of throwing in what graces he shall think the best adapted. If one considers the good and the evil, which may result from such a practice, the French usage may appear preferable ; it never allows their singers such a discretionary power, of which, ours, indeed, make so bad an use.

The French bind them down to be the mere performers of others thoughts, no more. It is true, to hear constantly an exact replication of the same thing, must be disagreeable; therefore, the most reasonable measure, is to leave some occasions for the skill, fancy, and feelings of a singer to display themselves: but the mischief of it is, that a singer is rarely to be found; who, whether through ignorance, or through an immoderate lust of pleasing, hath either judgment enough, or inclination to be confined to the subject, and will not depart from it, forgetful of all decorum and truth. Hundreds of common-place rhapsodists, and of ridiculous heads, that thrust in matter foreign from the subject, are to be met for one performer, in whom knowledge is united with taste, in whom elegance and nature combine, and whose fancy is subordinate to his judgment.

To the happy few of that stamp, on whom Apollo smiles, be it allowed to throw in supplemental touches of their own; because, they can best enter into the sense of the com-

poser, and are not liable to disagree (as we say) with the base, and movement of the instruments. But, for all others, not thus qualified, let a master be provided that shall write down every thing they are to do, leading them by the hand in every variation, and in every passage. For this very reason, it should not be a matter of so much indifference as it now is, to abandon to the fingers their conclusive cadenzas, which they most commonly pervert to a quite different meaning and complexion from what was intended by the air: for here the finger is fond of crouding in all the graces, all the difficulties, and all the musical tricks he is master of; —ridiculous! They should arise naturally from the air, and be, as it were, the peroration or epilogue to it.

If our fingers were well instructed in their mother tongue, were taught the use of graceful action, were properly initiated in the knowledge of music, and above all, were under due submission to good composers; what then should hinder our hopes of having re-

vived among us, that manner of singing which penetrates the soul? And of seeing new Sifacis, new Buzzolenis, and new Cartonas arise; the memory of whom is not extinct, altho' their voices be heard no more. If also, an expressive melody, accompanied with proper instruments, and having good poetry for its basis, were to be executed by singers free from affectation, and animated by gestures both fitting and noble, then music would be invested with the arbitrary power of exciting, or calming our passions; and then should we see renewed in our times, similar effects to those, which that enrapturing art had caused among the ancients, and for this apparent reason of her enjoying now the like auxiliary concomitants. But it would be folly in us to hope for obtaining, by one single article, what requires the concurrence of many*.

* "We are to consider, that the music with the ancients, was of a larger extent than what we call music now-a-days: for poetry and dancing or [comely motion] were then accounted parts of music, when music arrived to some perfection—what we now call music, is but what they called
harmony

It is not to be doubted, that whenever music shall be restored to her pristine dignity, Operas will be honoured with the attention of the public, and be heard with the greatest delight from the beginning to the end, because then a grateful silence will be imposed on all spectators; whereas, quite the contrary is now observable in our theatres; on entering one of which, so great a confusion and uproar is heard, as to resemble the bellowing of a wood in a storm, or the roaring of the sea to a tempestuous wind*. Even the most attentive of our now Opera-frequenters can be silent only to hear some air of Bravura; but they are all desire at the dances, which can never begin too soon for their im-

harmonic; which was but one part of their music, (consisting of words, verse, voice, tune, instrument, and acting) and we are not to expect the same effect of one piece as of the whole." — Strange effects reported of music in former times examined by Dr. Wallis.—Philosoph. Transact. abridged, v. I. p. 618, 619.

- * *Garganum mugire putes nemus, aut mare Tuscum,
Tanto cum strepitu, ludi spectantur, & artes.*

HORAT.

patience, nor last too long for their enjoying them ; so that it may now be asserted of the dances, that they have taken possession of the spectators hearts as well as of their eyes *. It seems indeed, as if our theatre had been intended rather for an academy of dancing, than the representation of an Opera ; and one would be induced to think, that the Italians have adopted the Frenchman's advice, who said, not unpleasantly, that, in order to make the theatre flourish, the dances should be lengthened, and the women's petticoats made shorter.

- * Verum equitis quoque jam migravit ab aure voluptas,
Omnis ad incertos oculos, & gaudia vana, HORAT.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE DANCES.

What is the essence and nature of Dancing, which people run so passionately after? It never was a constituent part of the drama; is always foreign from the business, and very often repugnant to it. As soon as an act is over, several dancers sally forth on the stage, who have no manner of affinity with the plan of the piece. For, if the scene of action be in Rome, the dance is often made to be in Cusco, or in Pekin; and if the Opera be serious, the dance to be sure is comic. Nothing can be imagined so devoid of a methodical proceeding, of explanatory connection, or that is carried on with such irregular bounds from one appearance to another, or is so much a stranger to (if it is not profaning the word on such an occasion) the law of continuity, an inviolable law of nature, and

which it is the duty of all her imitative arts never to transgress.

But no more on that head; because, in the present licentiousness of taste, it might be rebuked as the sophistry of hypercriticism: therefore let us to the point. The dancing, which delights some people so much, is in itself (as now used by us) nothing better than irrational caprioling from the beginning to the very end, an illiberal skipping about, which ought never to be applauded by persons of a polite education, being as it were a perpetual monotony of a very few steps, and of as few figures. The wonted custom now is, that, after the preluding flourish of a very disagreeable tune, a couple of young men are detached on the stage from the dancing band, all in readiness behind the scenes; and it is the hackneyed practice, that one of them robs the other of a nose-gay, some flowers, &c. or plays him a trick of this sort; they grow angry with each other; but soon become reconciled, although they stop not for a moment to settle the mat-

ter: then one invites the other to dance, and to it they go, like mad folks, without the least moderation. After the first two have done their task, two of larger size come on, who are succeeded by the two chief dancers; they likewise perform a dance of the same complexion; and it is epilogued by the latter part of the tune, which is to the full as bad as its beginning. Whoever knows one dance, knows them all; for, though dancers may change their dresses, the characters introduced are seldom varied.

Whoever, as far as relates to the art of dancing, would let his judgment be warped by what he sees in vogue with Italians, and would not raise his thoughts higher, must be induced to consider as fabulous relations, many things that are nevertheless founded upon truth. Those accounts, for example, which are to be read in authors, of the very tragic effects that had been caused in Athens by the dance of the Eumenides, as well as of the powerful energy transfused into others by the

amazing skill and execution of Pylades and Batillus ; one of whom could excite pity or terror by dancing, the other could provoke jollity and laughter. These divided Rome into two parties in the reign of Augustus.

It happens but very rarely that, in our Italian dancers, strength of body is united with a gracefulness of figure ; or a delicate display of the arms with a dextrous activity in the feet ; or that a certain ease and gentle sway appear in their movements ; without which concomitants, dancing is a fatigue, not only to the performers, but even to the spectators. Yet these are nothing more than the rudiments of the art, or, to speak with more propriety, the requisite materials ; but the final accomplishing of, and tasteful form suitable to the subject, is another thing, and requires great delicacy of judgment in the contrivance.

The art of dancing ought to be imitative of nature, and of the affections of the mind by the body's moving to musical numbers. It is her office to speak continually, and paint

to the eyes. A dance, moreover, should have its exposition, its intricacy, and denouement; it ought to be the quintessential abridgment of an action. A brilliant example of what we have here advanced is the dance of *The Gamester*, composed on an admirable air of Jumelli; in which are wonderfully expressed all the incidents in the charming intermezzo called by the same name.

It is but just, however, to own, that in the comic, or rather perhaps the grotesque style, we have had dances composed among us worthy of applause; and dancers, of whom it might be said, that they were eloquent both in hands and feet, and whose execution was not perhaps inferior to that of Batillus.

But for composing and performing both serious and heroic dances, not only we Italians, but all the other nations of Europe, must strike to the French. For what people, in the modern world, hath applied themselves so studiously as they have to excel in the art of dancing, for which indeed they seem to be fitted by nature, as Italians are for music.

Coregraphy, or the art of dancing, took its rise among them about the end of the fifteenth century ; and in these latter times they have produced the ballets of La Rose, Ariane, Pygmalion, and many others, that approach very near to the excellence of Pylades, and of the most celebrated antient pantomimes.

The French are the acknowledged masters in this school of the imitative arts, nor ought any other nation to be ashamed to take lessons from them in this article of polite accomplishment. We Italians, in particular, may, without ceremony, receive from the French, wherewith to render our Opera-exhibition less imperfect, since to us the French are indebted for the very institution of theirs.

CHAP. V.

ON SCENERY, DRESS, &c.

To the many improprieties, with which the dances now abound, may be added those observable in the ornaments and dresses of the dancers: for their dresses, as well as those of the singers, ought to approach as near as possible to the manners of the times and nations which are represented; I say as near as possible, because the stage must be allowed occasionally some liberties; and in this article, more than in any other, ought it to avoid the imputation of stiffness, and pedantry. If, on one hand, it is not expected, that our artists plan out, hit exactly, and trim up a toga, or chlamys, in so accurate a manner, as they are described by the learned Ferrario; yet, on the other, they never should be permitted to put pipes into the mouths, and Dutch breeches on the posteriors of Æneas's Trojan companions. But, in order

that dresses should be appropriated according to the custom of a country, and be well fancied at the same time, the assistance of a Julio Romano, and a Tribolo, would be wanted ; because in that article they have given proofs of their skill ; or at least it would be necessary that the persons, who superintend the wardrobe-department, were blest'd with a kindred genius to those eminent artists.

It would have been still more necessary for our modern painters to copy after a San Gallo and a Peruzzi, because we consequently should not see in our theatres the temple of Jupiter or Mars bear a resemblance to the church of Jesus, nor would the architecture of a piazza in Carthage have a gothic complexion ; for, in all scene-painting, the costume and propriety must be united. The scenery is the first object in an Opera that powerfully attracts the eye, that determines the place of action, and co-operates chiefly to the illusive enchantment, that makes the spectator imagine himself to be transported either to Egypt, to Greece, to Troy, to Mexico,

to the Elyfian Fields, or even up to Olympus.

Who does not now perceive of what importance it is, that the painter's imagination should be regulated by learning, and guided by a correct judgment? To this will greatly contribute the perusal of authors and conversation of learned men well skilled in the customs of antiquity. But the artist should have recourse to no person preferably to the poet, the author of the Opera, who, we are to suppose, has preconceived in his mind every article; and to have omitted nothing that can help to embellish, or make the action he has chosen to exhibit, appear probable.

Although the painters of the fifteenth century are, without doubt, the most excellent, yet the art of scene-painting received considerable improvements in the last age, and the obvious reason is, the many theatres, then erected, gave occasion to that species of painting to become more common; whence it necessarily followed, that a greater number of ingenious persons, applying

themselves to it, have brought it nearer to perfection.

The devised contrivances of Giralomo Genga, (extolled so much by Serlio) to make, in the theatre of Urbino, trees, &c. of the finest silk, would now-a-days be classed among the childish baubles that adorn the manger, in the shews of Christ's nativity. It is farther my opinion, that Serlio, from whose treatise upon scenery there may nevertheless some good hints be taken, did not sufficiently consider how, without the assistance of relievos in wood, we might conquer all the difficulties of perspective; and how, in very confined situations, we could represent the appearance of extensive space; but to such a pitch the science of deceiving the eye has been improved in our time. The introduction, especially, of accidental points, or rather the invention of viewing scenes by the angle, produces the finest effects imaginable; but that requires the nicest judgment to bring properly into practice. FERDINANDO BIBIENA was the inventor of those scenes,

which, by the novelty of the manner, drew the eyes of all the curious upon him. They soon began to look upon, as unpleasing objects for a stage, those streets, and narrow passages, those galleries that were always made to tend to its center, there at once to limit the spectators imagination and sight.

He had studied the principles of his art in Vignola under good masters : moreover, being endowed with a picturesque and animating fancy, he came to a resolution of giving a meaning to his scenes, after the same manner as had been done before him, by the painters in the fifteenth century, to the figures of Bellini, Perrugi, and Mantegna*.

Ferdinando Bibiena was the Paul Veronese of the theatre ; and, like him, he enjoyed the glory of raising his art to the summit, so far as relates to the magnificent, and to

* The writer of this essay hath in his possession a large volume of designs by the same artist, which are a more evincing proof of his superior merit, than those engravings that are carried about in his name, and executed by Bufagnoti and Abbati.

a certain degree of the marvellous. He had the luck too, like Veronese, of not establishing it by the pupils reared up under him. They employed all their pains in imitating the easiest part of his manner, which was the whimsical; forgetting the fundamentals of the art, by which means only things are rendered probable: therefore, in professing to follow, they went quite astray from their master.

The most new fangled whims, the most out of the way conceits, that could be imagined, were the objects they delighted to represent; and, not to mention a certain arbitrary perspective of their own creation, they bestowed the name of cabinet on what ought to be called a large saloon, or a hall; and the name of prison on what might serve for a portico, or rather for a piazza.

Vitruvius relates the following anecdote of a painter, employed at Tralli to execute a scene: He introduced therein some things, that, without sinning against verisimilitude, could have no place there. The citizens,

however, were about honouring his performance with their approbation, it being in some parts finished in a very masterly manner. But all on a sudden, one Licinius, a mathematician, by thus accosting them, opened their eyes, “Do ye not perceive, my fellow citizens, that, if ye should praise in pictures what can neither stand the scrutiny of the judicious, nor be warranted by taste, your city will run a great risk of being ranked among those that are not remarkable for a keenness of understanding *.”

What would that mathematician say, were he now alive, on hearing so much applause lavished by us on those labyrinths of architecture, those crowded buildings, with which our scenes are surcharged, and from which all semblance of truth is excluded; or those unwieldy fabricks, that appear neither to stand upright, nor to have a settled foundation; and where the columns, having their architraves topsy-turvey, and jumbled with the

* Lib. VII. Cap. V.

roof, lose themselves in a sea of clouding rags, suspended in mid-air. The like blundering is visible in the volutes, being executed in so defective and lame a manner. But even among us there rises up now and then a Licinius *. For something similar to what had happened to the above-mentioned painter, was the case of father Pozzi, one of the masters in the modern school. In his picture of a cupola he made the columns to lean upon little props, which was ridiculed by several architects, declaring that, for any consideration, they would not have done the like in a real structure. Nevertheless, they were made to alter their opinion, as he himself relates, by a friend of his, who offered to bind himself to pay all expences of an experiment to be made, if, in striking away such props, the columns should fall. However, that is but a poor excuse ; as if archi-

* *Utinam Dii immortales fecissent, ut Licinius revivisceret, & corrigeret & hanc amentiam.*

Would to the immortal Gods, that Licinius were to rise up again to correct this madness.

ecture were not to be painted according to rule, and as if what offends in a reality, would not offend the imagination in a picture.

To keep their conceptions within the boundaries of prudence, it will be expedient for painting artists never to be tired of studying those venerable pieces of ancient architecture that are yet standing. India can furnish them also with several noble examples, as can likewise Greece. To her we are indebted for the revival of correct architecture. Even Egypt, the first mistress of all polite institutions, can supply many useful hints. And in effect, what can be more superb and awful, not to mention the pyramids, than the remains of Memnon's palace, that tower along the banks of the river Nile, or of that ancient city Thebes, with an hundred gates; all which the public can now enjoy by the means of Norden's accurate performance*. They are admirable, not only in their forms, but in the chaste ornaments which they receive from the colossal

* See his Travels into Egypt.

parts, and the sphynxes that accompany them, because therein most conspicuously appears the Tuscan manner; and if they were sometimes, properly introduced on the stage, they would produce amazing effects.

China also, that ancient nursery of the arts, peopled, as some will have it, by a colony from Egypt, may also furnish very beautiful scenes. But, as I have above objected against the exhibition of any capricious and fantastical combinations, which, to the disgrace of our national taste, have got too great a footing among us, and have supplanted the learnedly grotesque compositions of Gioan da Udine, and of other cotemporary masters with him: I do not mean here that our painters should imitate either pagods or towers of porcelain, unless the subject of the Opera be Chinese.

The objects I purpose to recommend to the imitation of our artists, from which pleasing ideas will arise, and delightful scenes may be drawn, are the gardens of that most ingenious nation; for the gardeners there are

so many painters, who do not lay out their ground with the same regularity which architects observe in building houses; no, they take nature for their guide, and employ all their efforts to imitate her noble disregard of symmetric order, and her fondness of variety.

Their favourite practice is to make a choice of those objects, which, in their several kinds are most entertaining to the eye. Then they arrange them in such a manner, as that the one may be a contrast to the other, and that from the whole may result something new and uncommon. In their little woods there is planted a lively intermixture of those trees, which are of a different appearance, condition, colour, and nature. What a variety of situations do they contrive to exhibit in one place! Here we are alarmed on viewing rocks, cut in so artificial a manner, as to appear pendulous in air; or cascades of water, bursting from caverns and grottos, where they know how to make the light play in various ways. In another part we are charmed with the sight of flowery parterres,

limpid canals, lovely islands, crown'd with pretty edifices, whose reflexion is seen in the water. Thus, from the most horrid prospects, they waft us in a moment to the most enchanting ; and from the marvellous the delightful is never separate ; to produce which effect in a garden, costs them as much application and study, as an author is subject to in composing the fable of a poem.

The English have derived their present taste in gardening from the Chinese, by which means it is that their Kent and Chambers have so far surpassed Le Nautre, who before their time was esteemed to be the unrivalled master of the art of laying out gardens. The French regularity is now banished from all the villas in England. The most delightful situations there have the complexion of nature. Cultivated ground is intermixed with parts neglected ; and a seeming irregularity is the effect of consummate art *.

* On a bad taste in gardens.

His gardens next your admiration call ;
On ev'ry side you look, behold the wall.

But to return nearer home ; what is the reason our painters do not study those objects that are under their eyes ! Besides the ancient edifices still subsisting in Italy, the elegant fabrics erected in modern times, might often be introduced on the scenes without incurring the charge of impropriety. And likewise, why do they not study those plans of architecture that adorn many of Paolè's pictures, by which he may be said to have rendered the events of history theatrical ? Why also do they not study the landskips of Poussin,

No pleasing intricacies intervene,
No artful wildness to perplex the scene :
Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other.

On a good taste in gardens.

Consult the genius of the place in all,
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall,
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale ;
Calls in the country, catches open glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades ;
Now breaks, or now directs th' intending lines,
Paints as you plant, and as you work designs.

POPE.

of Titian, of Marchetto Ricci, and Claudio, who all possessed the secret of observing and collecting from nature her most valuable and attractive appearances? Finally, I would advise those painters, unendowed with imaginative powers, to betake themselves to copying the pieces of the before-mentioned masters; and in so doing they would imitate that worthy churchman, who, rather than pester an audience with his own nonsensical sermons, got by heart, and repeated to them those of Segneri.

Another most important article, not so much attended to as it should, is the not leaving convenient openings in the scenes, particularly of architecture, that the actors may come on, and go off the stage, in such a manner, as that their figures may appear, to an observer's eye, to be in a just proportion with the columns. We often see them obliged to advance from the bottom of the stage, because it is there that the only entrance is contrived for them, which makes their persons shew very incongruous and offensive to a discerning

spectator. The apparent magnitude of an object depends on a judicious comparison made of the exhibited figure, with its distance from us. So a figure, being supposed of such a magnitude, the farther it is distant from us, the greater the object will be esteemed. And hence may be assigned the reason why the performers, presenting themselves from the bottom of the stage, appear like so many towering giants, by the artificial magic of the scene, through the illusive power of perspective, inducing us to fancy them at a prodigious distance. Yet these imaginary giants dwindle by degrees, as they come forward, and are dwarfed down to their native size, as they approach nearer to us.

The same remark holds good in regard to attendants, guards, &c. who should never be made to enter at that part of the stage, where the capitals of the columns rise no higher than their shoulders, or perhaps their sword-belts, which defeats all deception intended by the scenery. Let this be a general caution:—It requires the greatest circumspec-

tion in a director, where it is necessary to blend falshood with truth ; for if the one give the lie to the other, a discovery ensues, and the whole is rejected as an intended imposition.

There yet remains an article to be mentioned, and of equal importance with the foregoing, though not sufficiently considered, and that erroneously ; to wit, the illumination of the scenes. What wonderful things might not be produced by the light, when not dispensed in that equal manner, and by degrees, as is now the custom. Were it to be played off with a masterly artifice, distributing it in a strong mass on some parts of the stage, and by depriving others, as it were, at the same time ; it is hardly credible what effects might be produced thereby ; for instance, a *chiaro obscuro*, for strength and vivacity, not inferior to that so much admired in the prints of Rembrant.

And pray, why might not a representation of the pleasing mixtures of light and shade, in the pictures of Giorgione or of Titian,

be found practicable on the stage? Nay, the more so, when we call to mind those little portable theatres, carried about under the names of mathematical optic-views, that represent sea ports, fleets engaged, &c. Therein the light is admitted through an oiled paper, that deadens the rays which might prove too striking, and by that means is so tempered, that its various rays gently con-fociate, and are reflected with the greatest harmony.

I also remember to have seen (on the occasion of shewing one of the holy sepulchres, according to a practice at Bologna) some very coarse pictures upon the walls of the church, and some contemptible statues, that seemed no better than as if made of bundles of coarse paper, which nevertheless, by receiving the light through some oiled papers from lanterns, appeared, although near our eyes, to be finished to the life, and of the purest marble.

Whenever a theatre shall be illuminated in the manner it ought, then will manifestly

triumph the great advantage our dramatic representations by night have over those of the ancients, which were by day ; and then no doubt but the scenery, displayed in such a theatre, being executed by the most eminent painters, remarkable too for their propriety and elegance, will not only please above, but even supersede all those capricious stage-exhibitions, that have shamefully been hitherto so much in vogue, and are even now so much extolled by certain would-be connoisseurs, who examine nothing, yet decide upon every thing.

Then such a revolution will happen in the Italian as once happened in the French theatre ; when, after the long reign of Spanish absurdities, which were a disgrace to Thalia, her favourite Moliere's judicious and natural comic pieces appeared. Rapid was the success they obtained through that resistless power, which truth has upon the minds of mankind, when once they are made acquainted with her. At that glorious epoch, did the learned Menagius

exultingly cry out, "Now, at last, the time is come to knock down those idols, before whose unhallowed shrines the misled natives of France have so long burnt incense."

C H A P. VI.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THEATRES.

Thus far we have treated of all the constituent parts of an Opera, that want to be corrected, and stand greatly in need of a thorough reformation. The desire of pleasing too much, was the principal cause of each straying beyond its due bounds ; by which transgressions, they have spoiled a composition, whose beauty should result from all the parts being properly adjusted together, and amicably co-operating with each other.

From the same source too, another fault has sprung ; and that is, when, in these latter times, an opportunity of building a new theatre presented itself, architecture, seized by the same contagious distemper, instead of considering the use and intent for which the structure was proposed, thought of

nothing but giving a loose to ornamental achievements, and all the expensive pomp of her art; which, indeed, rendered such edifices beautiful to the eyes of common beholders, but to the judicious they appeared culpable, because deviating from their intent.

As many debates upon this head, set the curious about enquiring what were the fittest materials to build a theatre with, as well as about the dimensions and form it ought to have, and the disposition of the boxes, and how they should be decorated; it will not be departing from our subject, to examine those articles a little. For since, as far as in our power lay, the requisite form of an Opera has been delineated; it is not improper now, to determine the most commodious form that can be given to the fabric in which it is to be exhibited, for the joint entertainment of our sight and hearing.

In regard to the first article, the materials, we cannot but very much approve the practice of those, who in building theatres, contrive that the galleries and the stairs be of brick or

stone: for besides the perpetuity such materials give to a building, they are its best insurance against fire, to which they are more liable than ~~any~~ other kind of structure*. Why then, whether for the sake of the fabric's perpetuity, or through a mistaken notion of magnificence, have not some artists taken it into their heads to make the boxes, and the interior parts looking towards the stage, of stone?—Because, such a proceeding would militate against the chief end an architect should propose to himself in erecting a theatre, to wit, that its sonoreity should be such, as that the voices of the singers may be heard as distinct as possible, and rendered, at the same time, both melodious and pleasing to the ears of an audience.

Daily experience teacheth us, that in a box, whose walls are naked, the singer's voice is reverberated in a particular manner; it sounds crude and harsh, and by no means flattering to the ear. The accents are quite lost,

* In Italy,

if the box be hung with tapestry; whereas, they are reflected full, sonorous, and agreeable to the ear, when the boxes are only boarded; which is an obvious proof, and confirmed by experience, that the best lining for the interior part of a theatre is wood, and, preferably, that species of which musical instruments are made, on account of its being more apt than any other, when struck by sound, to be agitated by the kind of vibrations, that are the most analogous with the organ of hearing.

The ancients, it is true, had vases made of bronze, fixed in certain places of their theatres, in order to encrease the sound of the actor's voice; but such edifices, among them, were made of solid materials, viz. stone, cement, or marble, which, are by no means resounding: while, on the contrary, such resources were unnecessary, in those made of wood; whose gift it is, as Vitruvius asserts, to reflect sounds*. And thus this great

* *Itaque ex his indagationibus mathematicis rationibus fiunt vasa area, pro ratione magnitudinis theatri.—Dicit aliquis forte multa*

master, among the ancients, comes now, as it were, by the rebound, to teach us moderns; what are the proper materials for constructing a theatre. Be it however remembered, that wood so employed, ought to be properly seasoned, and to be made throughout equally smooth and even; by which expedient, the vibrations will not come riding, as one may say, one upon the other; and that wood will reverberate the sonorous rays in the most regular manner, whose every fibre is vibrated alike.

Many persons think, that the vastness of a theatre contributes much to its beauty. It is certain, that large edifices have wherewithal to surprize, and please the human mind; but it is necessary, that in this article, as well as in every other, certain regulations and boundaries should be observed.

multa theatra Romæ quotianus facta esse, neque ullam rationem earum rerum in his fuisse; sed erravit in eo, quod omnia, publica lignea theatra tabulationes habent complures, quas necesse est sonare.—Cum autem ex solidis rebus theatra constituuntur, id est, ex structura cæmentorum, lapide, marmore, quæ sonare non possunt, tunc ex his hæc ratione sunt explicanda. Vitruv. lib. v. c. 5.

The extent of a place, Vitruvius declares, should always be in proportion to the multitude of the inhabitants ; so that on one hand, the space allotted should not be too narrow for conveniency and use, and on the other, through the fewness of the people, the forum should not appear solitary and unfrequented *. Now, without insisting upon the absurdity of a large theatre being built for a small district, let us consider, that the measure of the length of the parterre or pit, and size of a theatre, is the performers reach of voice, and none other. For it would be equally ridiculous in any person, to have a theatre built so large, as that people could not hear in it, as in an engineer, to make the works of a fortress in such a manner, as that they could not be defended ; which will always be the case when the line of defence, or the length of the curtain that ought to be the module for all the parts of

* *Magnitudines autem ad copias hominum oportet fieri, ne parvum spatium sit ad usum, aut ne propter inopiam populi vastum forum videatur. Lib. v. c. v.*

a fortification, are not made in a due reference to the reach of the musketry.

That the ancients had theatres much larger than ours, is not to be doubted; wherefore, besides the vases of bronze which they made use of to strengthen the voice, the mouth of the masks which the actors wore, were contrived so as to spread themselves outwards like a speaking trumpet: by such devices, the natural power of the voice was greatly increased. But we, being deprived of such assistance, must confine ourselves to narrower bounds; since who would be desirous of hearing the voice raised like to that of a crier; in other words, who would be desirous of truth disfigured by a misrepresentation of nature?

As most people are captivated with what appears grand and magnificent, some were induced to resolve on having a theatre built of an excessive extent, and out of all reason, where, however, they should hear commodiously; which to effect, they made the stage whereon the actors perform, to be advanced

into the parterre several feet ; by that expedient, the actors were brought forward into the middle of the audience, and there was no danger then of their not being heard. But such a contrivance can only please those, who are very easily to be satisfied. For who that reflects, does not see that such a proceeding is subversive of all good order and prudent regulation.

The actors, instead of being so brought forwards, ought to be thrown back at a certain distance from the spectator's eye, and stand within the scenery of the stage, in order to make a part of that pleasing illusion for which all dramatic exhibitions are calculated. But by such a preposterous inversion of things, the very intent of theatric representation is destroyed ; and the proposed effect defeated, by thus detaching actors from the precincts of the decoration, and dragging them forth from the scenes into the midst of the parterre ; which cannot be done by them without shewing their sides, or turning their shoulders to a great part of the audience, be-

sides many other inconveniencies; so that what was conceived would prove a remedy, became a very great evil.

Some were of opinion, that notwithstanding the largeness of a theatre, its interior formation might greatly contribute to render it commodious for hearing. They tortured their brains not a little to demonstrate such problematic doctrine; but without applying much to geometry for her assistance in their puzzled situation. For the better elucidation of their meaning, they made choice of the figure of a bell preferably to all others, and to which they were pleased to give the epithet of phonic.

According to those wiseacres, the mouth of the bell answers to the opening of the stage, and the middle box is placed where the clapper of a bell is suspended from. It is not difficult to discover, how such a notion could be received; it was, from the similitude or analogy which unphilosophical heads thought they discovered, between the figure of a bell and the sound it gave. But how

groundless such reasoning is, will readily appear; the concave figure of a bell, with its out-spreading lips, are extremely well fitted for the spreading abroad on every side, the sound which the clapper excites by striking on the lips; the bell being suspended on high, soon throws into agitation the ocean of air that surrounds it. What can be thence inferred? Is it to be expected that the voice of a singer, who is placed, as it were, in the mouth of the bell of the stage, can cause the like effect in the internal parts of it.

An absurdity of this sort, can only be adopted by such understandings as believe, that the person who is born under the sign of Aquarius, will undergo great perils upon sea; or by those, who, against the bite of a serpent, prescribe, as a sovereign specific, the serpentine wood, because it resembles a serpent; with many other inferences equally ridiculous, yet have been esteemed as the legitimate children of analogy, when the syllogistic sophistry of the schools had disgraced the name of philosophy. Besides the inconveniencies

already recited, there are others annexed to the figure of a bell, in the sense those pseudo-connoisseurs would apply it; as the narrowing, in the manner of a bell towards its upper part, the area of the parterre, and thereby screening several boxes from a view of the stage, &c.

Should we perchance be asked, What then is the most commodious shape that can be given to the interior part of a theatre, and which of the curve lines is the most eligible for disposing the boxes in the best manner? Our answer is; the same that the ancients made use of in their theatres, the semi-circular.

It is well known, that of all the figures of an equal perimeter, the circle is that which contains the greatest space. Therefore, the spectators placed in a semi-circle, are all presented in a like manner towards the stage, of which they have a full view, their hearing and seeing being alike uninterrupted. So true it is, that, after all the wanderings from art, in curious researches, we are often obliged to return to the simple and plain instructions

the had delivered to our forefathers. There is one inconveniency which the semi-circle, as employed in modern theatres hath, and which proceeds from our stage being built in a different manner from that of the ancients, whereby the opening of it is too large for the side parts of the audience to see well. But the cause of this complaint might be very soon removed. There needs no more than to change the semi-circular into a semi-elliptic form, which comprehends almost the same advantages; and then its minor axis might be the opening of the stage, and its larger allotted for the spectators.

There is yet a better manner of arranging the boxes; and for which invention we are indebted to Andrea Sighizzi, the scholar of Brizio and Dentone; he was the predecessor of Bibiena; his method though, had been approved, and made use of even by them. The plan he followed was, that the boxes, according as they were to be removed from the stage towards the bottom of the theatre, should continue gradually rising by some inches one

above the other, and gradually receding to the sides by some inches ; by which means, every box would have a more commodious view of the stage ; and the sight of one, could not be intercepted by the other, especially if the partition that separates them were made pervious, in a rack-like form, as may be seen in the Formagliari theatre at Bologna, finished in this manner, under the direction of Sigghizzi.

The boxes, be they ever so well arranged, have yet one fashionable vice to get rid of, viz. those ornamental parts that have too much relieve, too many swellings and sinuous cavities ; because the voice, by such inequalities, is reverberated irregularly, and in part lost. For ever be banished from the interior part of a theatre, that kind of ornamenting which represents the orders of architecture : a pedantic affectation devolved to us from the fifteenth century ; at which period no scrivener's office, or even a family-cupboard, was made without being ridiculously adorned with all the orders of the Coliseum ; but such

misplaced decorations are not suitable to a theatre.

The pilasters and columns that are made to the boxes, as their elevation can be but of a few feet, present a bad appearance, they seem dwindled into pygmies, by losing so much of that loftiness and dignity which is their natural right. The ornaments above, although the cornices be architraved, are too high for the size of simple boxes; besides, their purpose is nothing more than to separate one range of boxes from another.—But this is not all that is exceptionable here, for as to act conformably to the laws of architecture, it is necessary to give to the upper ranges, a greater air of lightness, what the Italians call *Sveltezza*, than to the inferior; consequently the boxes must be different in height, whence the internal part of the theatre, is made like a semi-zone or tower; and thus, without any necessity, the spectators in the uppermost range of boxes, are quite thrown out from the point of view, which is settled by the middle box in the first range; or else, there will

be but few ranges of boxes made, and thereby a great space will be lost.

Let the architect, whose province it is to ornament the interior parts of a theatre in a proper manner, condescend to take for model, a certain species of the grotesque, which is yet to be seen in ancient pictures; and also of the gothic, they being nearly a-kin; this proposal, we are well aware, will offend over-nice modern ears.

My meaning is, that I would have the props of the boxes to be made very slender, having but a small weight to support. Let the ornaments above, be narrow and confined; but in all the parts, of a light and delicate workmanship. In fine, the architect's principal care, should be to leave no article unremedied that might any way tend to impede the view: and at the same time, to let no gaping chasm appear, by any space remaining unoccupied, and lost to every serviceable purpose. Let him also contrive, that the audience may appear to form a part of the spectacle to each other; ranged as books are

are in a library. For producing such an effect, no better example can be proposed, than the theatre of Faunus, admirably designed by Jacopo Torelli; who, in the last century, having passed many years of his life in France, was afterwards ennobled by his country.

An architect will find opportunities of displaying his talents and judgment in directing the workmanship, as well as the ornamental part of the boxes, and of the rest of the theatre. That artist will justly merit our praise, who will order the carving in wood to be light, but with taste at the same time; and he will be indulged in displaying all the pomp and magnificence of his art on the outside, in galleries, niches, balconies, &c. I have seen two plans in Italy, wherein no article was wanting, even for modern dramatic representations, yet all the majesty of the Grecian theatre was preserved.

One of them was the performance of Tommaso Temanza, a man of extraordinary merit; and who, by his writings, has given new life to Sausovino and Palladio: the other

was the production of the Conte Giralomo dal Pozzo ; who, by his works, has revived in Verona, his native country, the grateful memory of Samnichele. The theatre, which was dedicated some years ago in Berlin to Apollo and the Muses, does not fall far short of their idea, and is ranked among the first rate ornaments of that imperial city.

CONCLUSION.

There yet remain several articles that might be added to a subject of this nature, which is the result of so many different arts, each in itself important, copious, and not ignoble. Let it however suffice, for me to have pointed out the way thus far, having proposed to myself no other view, than to shew the intimate connection that ought to be kept up among the several constituent parts of the musical drama or opera; by which means, the effect will be one regular and harmonious *whole*. The doctrine here laid down will be found sufficient, whenever it shall be so lucky as to be honoured by the countenance of a sovereign, blessed with a refined understanding and delicacy of taste; because, through such a wished-for protection, may be restored to its ancient rank in

the public's esteem, a species of scenical exhibition, to whose accomplishment and final embellishing, all the polite arts emulously concur. Therefore, for many other reasons that might be assigned, it is an object not unworthy of a place in the attention even of those who govern kingdoms.

At so happy an epoch as that hinted here, we should behold the theatres no longer as a place destined for the reception of a tumultuous assembly, but as the meeting of a solemn audience; where an Addison, a Dryden, a Dacier, a Muratori, a Gravina, a Marcelli, might be spectators, without the least disparagement to their judgments.

Then would the Opera be no longer called an irrational, monstrous, and grotesque composition: on the contrary, it would display a lively image of the Grecian tragedy, in which, architecture, poetry, music, dancing, and every kind of theatrical apparatus united their efforts to create an illusion of such irresistible power over the human mind, that from the combination of a thousand pleasures,

formed so extraordinary a one, as in our world has nothing to equal it *.

But since, agreeably to what I have advanced in the beginning of this essay, the drama or poem of an Opera, is to contain in it every part, the ground work of every beauty; it is upon the well conducting of that, the success of the whole must depend—I therefore thought it not unnecessary to give two examples of a drama, according to the manner I have devised. One of them *ÆNEAS IN TROY*; the other, *IPHIGENIA IN AULIS* †.

The former, is but the embrio of a drama, the latter is a finished one.

* *Il faut se rendre a ce palais magique,
Ou les beaux vers, la danse, la musique,
L'art de tromper les yeux par les couleurs,
De ceux plaisirs font un plaisir unique.*

Let us repair to that gay magic temple, where the power of verse, of dancing, and of music, joined to the sweet embellishments of painting, can make such various charms combine to form one blissful scene.

VOLTAIRE.

† An *Iphegenia in Aulis*, has been represented at the theatre royal in Berlin, with the greatest Applause,

Æneas in Troy, is little more than the second book of the Æneid of Virgil, put into action, with some few alterations, in order to make every incident, as it should, refer to Æneas, who is the principal actor in the piece.

The other drama, Iphigenia in Aulis, is the subject Euripides represented on the Athenian stage; and which, in modern times, has been transferred from the Grecian to the French theatre, by the affecting muse of the tender Racine.

In some parts of the fable I have followed the ancient poet, in others the modern: assuming to myself the liberty, among other things, of departing occasionally from the one, where necessary to render the action quite simple; and from the other, to exhibit Iphigenia with a consistency of character suitable to the *costume* of her age and country. For though she hath a fondness for life, through that natural sensation common to all; yet, as a Grecian princess, and daughter of Agamemnon, she meets her fate with a be-

coming fortitude. In my sketch, she is not made a timid suppliant from the beginning, and by a sudden change at the end, entirely the reverse, as Euripides hath drawn her; for which irregular deviation in point of character, and palpable violation of the *costume*, he was justly censured by Aristotle in his Art of Poetry*.

Where I have copied Racine, I have made use of his diction as far as my abilities would permit. Where I have followed Euripides's plan, Brumoy's translation answered my purpose, and the more so, as I am confident that the Grecian poet himself, had it been his lot to write in French, could not have cloathed his sentiments with a happier diction.

What I have added of my own, hath been executed in the best manner I could, in order to make the whole wear a congenial semblance of style, in order that it should not appear like a piece of mosaic work, made partly of

* Εἶστι δὲ παράδειγμα ποιησίας μὲν ἡδους
τοῦ δὲ ἀνωμάλου ἢ ἐν αὐλίσσι ἱφιγένεια, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἵστικεν ἢ
ἰκετεύουσα τῇ ὑστέρᾳ.

stones, and partly of glass. My intent in these essays, is to enforce by example, the doctrine I have delivered, and to present it to the reader's eye in a more striking point of light; that he, in consequence, may have clearer ideas, and form to himself a sounder judgment, whether the rules communicated be practicable or not; although at the same time I may, perhaps, be considered not unlike to that individual, who, having composed the best rules imaginable for tactics, yet could not command twenty grenadiers to wheel about to the right.

ÆNEAS IN TROY.

— *Quæque ipsa miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui.*

The personages to be represented are, Æneas, Priam, Paris, Anchises, Iulus, Sinon, Pyrrhus, Calchas, Cassandra, Hecuba, Creusa. The chorusses are to consist of Trojan men and women, as well as of the deities, both adverse, and friendly to Troy.

The scene of the first act, exhibits the country adjacent to Troy; the wooden horse on one side. Priam advances from the city, at the head of the principal Trojans; celebrates the flight of the Greeks, and the deliverance of his kingdom. The old king enjoys a rapturous triumph, on beholding the shore cleared of his enemies, and their ships;

observing—Here the dolopian camp was pitched; in this place many a battle fought,

— *hic sævus tendebat Achilles,*

and here the fierce Achilles loof'd his vengeful ire. Hecuba, at these words, calls to mind her son Hector, whom Achilles had slain, and afterwards dragged his body round the walls of Troy. The chorus comfort her, joining at the same time with Priam, to celebrate the flight of the Greeks; of which shameful departure, the Horse, consecrated to Minerva, will prove a perpetual monument.

In the midst of their song and dance of joy, enters Cassandra,

Verace semper, e non creduta mai,

Announcing always truth, yet ne'er believed. She prophecies that day to be Troy's last, and counsels them to plunge the wooden horse into the sea; adding,

— *timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,*

I dread the Greeks, especially when they offer presents. Æneas accosts her, and is of opinion, that the horse should be examined, whether any ambush were therein concealed by the Greeks; but he is opposed by many. Priam invokes the tutelary gods of Troy to inspire him for the best; while the rest sacrifice to the river Xanthus, and to the nymphs of mount Ida, inviting them to descend, and join with Venus, to partake of a festive song and choral dance, upon the spot where lately Mars enjoyed the cruel sport of war.

In the second act, Sinon is brought a prisoner before the king, and utters to him that speech, in which Virgil, by his harmonious numbers, hath transmitted to us a noble and energetic specimen of Grecian eloquence. In vain doth Æneas make every effort to oppose the horse's being admitted within the walls of Troy. The art of Sinon finally prevails, and vanquishes a people,

*Quos neque Tydides, nec Larissæus Achilles,
Non anni domuere decem, non mille Carinæ,*

Whom neither Diomed, nor Larissa's chief,
nor ten years conflict, nor a thousand ships,
could e'er subdue. Paris, with an instrument of
music in his hand, commences an hymn to
Venus and Minerva, now reconciled: at the
same time, part of the city wall is broken
down, for the easier introduction of the horse,
which is drawn within its precincts, amidst
songs of joy and festive dances, by the in-
fatuated Trojans;

—— *pueri circum innuptæque puellæ
Sacra canunt, funemque manū contingere
gaudent;*

Their blooming youths and lovely maids
sing votive strains around, rejoicing to touch
with eager hands, the cords that pull it on.

The third act is begun by Æneas, who,
rowfed in the early part of the night from
his sleep, by a terrifying vision of Hector,
repairs to his tomb with presents and offer-

ings ; there commiserates the destiny of his country, and calls upon the immortal gods to witness, that he had done all that was in his power, to prevent the fatal horse from being brought within the city. He farther entreats the Gods, to endow him with a courage like to that of Hector, when he set fire to the Grecian ships ; in order, that if his country be doomed to fall, it may not fall unrevenge'd. He then shapes his course to Priam's palace.

The scene changes to an ample area before the temple of Pallas, where the horse is lodged as a sacred deposit. Sinon relates to Calchas and Pyrrhus (come from within the horse) how his fine-laid scheme had like to have miscarried through the opposition of Æneas : when he remonstrates, that one of the first and most necessary articles to be done for the insuring success, is to dispatch Æneas, being, since Hector's death, the bravest warrior Troy can boast of. During this speech, the Grecians are seen to descend from the horse.

Calchas animates them in a few words to destroy the hostile city, then commences a

cantata in a low voice, to which the Greeks answer also in the same way. About the end of the chorus, a battle is begun at the bottom of the stage, between the guards of the citadel, and some Grecians descended from the horse, who want to make themselves masters of the fort. The tumult encreases by the arrival of the Grecian troops from without the city. Calchas and Sinon, at the front of the stage, pray in a loud voice. And, at certain intervals, the cries, the groans and lamentations, of people wounded and expiring, are made to concert with their songs.

The scene of the fourth act is in the courtyard of Priam's palace.

*Ædibus in mediis, nudoque sub ætheris axe
Ingens ara fuit, juxtaque veterrima laurus,
Incumbens aræ, atque umbrâ complexa Penates:*

In the midst of the imperial edifice, and under the open air, stands a great altar; near to it a laurel tree leaning upon the shrine, and with its foliage, hospitably embracing the

household gods. There afflicted Hecuba is seen with some Trojan dames, who, all fearful and suppliant, clasp the statues of the gods. Old Priam comes on at one side of the stage, scarce able to walk, being whelmed under an unwieldy weight of armour, which, vainly, he would put on. Hecuba no sooner sees, than she hastes to place him in the consecrated seat near the altar, and thus addresses him,

—*Quæ mens tam dira, miserrime conjux,
Impulit his cingi telis? aut quo ruis?—
Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis;
Tempus eget;*

unhappy husband, what fatal resolution hath impelled you to be thus clothed in armour; or whither do you rush? Alas, the present calamity requires not such assistance as thine, nor so unavailing a defence. For if Troy can yet be saved, it must be by Æneas's valour only; who now defends the tower of the palace, and by the slaughter of so many Greeks, hath in part avenged the havock of his country.

One of the principal Trojan dames remarks, how much more advantageous it might have proved, to pay a proper attention to the advice of Æneas, and the prophecy of Cassandra. On the instant, a tremendous noise is heard of the tower falling to the ground. Hecuba begins a prayer to the gods, in which she beseeches them to preserve from captivity the concubines of Priam, and his queen.—The other women have hardly time to reassume the votive strain, when Pyrrhus enters, pursuing Polites, who falls dead at his father's feet. Next follows, the speech of Priam, strongly accompanied. Then the distressed old king

*Telum imbelle sine ictu
Conjicit,*

lets fly a weak and ineffectual arrow at Pyrrhus; who replies, according to the words in Virgil, and kills the aged monarch. The women fill the air with shrieks; Pyrrhus orders them to be conducted to the ships of Greece, and goes off in quest of Æneas. The

Trojan prince enters from the opposite side of the stage, and descrying Priam slain, makes a short lamentation over him,

Hæc finis Priami fatorum —

such is the end of Priam's fate. And straight bethinks him of his own aged sire, Anchises; and his young son Iulus. But having formed a resolution to perish with his country, and to wreak some share of vengeance either on Helen, or on Sinon; his mother Venus appears, and shews to him the adverse deities to Troy, all zealously confederated in its overthrow. — Æneas being gone off the stage, a chorus succeeds by those deities, and a ballet by furies.

In the fifth act is introduced, in the residence of Æneas, that noble contention, so masterly expressed by Virgil, between Anchises, determined to expire with Troy, and his son Æneas, resolved to snatch him from falling into the hands of the Grecian spoilers. Not being able to prevail, he resumes his arms, to sally out again among

the Greeks ; but as Creusa and Iulus, lay hold on Æneas to stop him, a sudden miraculous flame descends from heaven, and plays inoffensively round the head of little Iulus. Thunder is heard on the left side ! Stricken with such admonitions from above, Anchises consents at last to depart.

The scene changes, and presents the horrible view of a dismantled city, half of it a prey to flames ;

— *Humi fumat Neptunia Troja,*

Troy, which Neptune built, now smoaks upon the ground. The chorus here, is to consist of Trojans deploring their calamity ; and of Grecians insulting them as they march ; the Coryphæus is cruel Calchas.

As soon as the stage is cleared, Æneas enters, seeking for, and calling Creusa, who, in the flight, had lost her way. Her ghost appears to him, and foretels, first, his destined wanderings on the sea ; and next,

his founding a new empire: at that word, through the smoke of Troy, must be seen to blaze forth, with resplendent glory, the capitol. Immediately follows a chorus of deities; and a ballet by Rome's protecting geni.

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IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

A N O P E R A.

Quot victimæ in unâ!

THE PERSONAGES.

AGAMEMNON

ACHILLES

ULYSSES

CLYTEMNESTRA, wife of Agamemnon

IPHIGENIA, daughter of Agamemnon

CALCHAS, high priest

ARCAS, one of Agamemnon's household officers

A BAND of soldiers belonging to Agamemnon

A BAND of Grecian nymphs

A BAND of virgins consecrated to Diana

A BAND of priests

A BAND of slaves, captives, and soldiers belonging to Achilles.

IPHIGENIA IN AULIS.

A C T I.

The theatre represents the Grecian camp, near the city of Aulis. A fleet of ships is seen at the bottom of the stage. On the front part of it is the entrance to the royal tent of Agamemnon. The theatre, dark at first, becomes gradually enlightened.

S C E N E I.

AGAMEMNON, ARCAS.

AGAMEMNON.

Come Arcas; haste: obey your sov'reign's call.

ARCAS.

Why thus great king fore-run the morning's dawn?

No eyes but yours in Aulis do yet wake;
The birds, the winds, the Euripus is still,
An universal silence reigns o'er all.

AGAMEMNON.

Happy who, far from glory and renown,
Nor know their splendour, nor the cares annex'd.

ARCAS.

Can Agamemnon, sprung from thund'ring Jove,
Chief of our army, first of twenty kings,
Supreme commander of a thousand ships,
By leagued Greece 'gainst Asia's shore em-
ploy'd,

Speak such desponding words as those I've heard?
Fair Iphigenia is your lovely daughter,
And her, Achilles (of a goddess born,
The foremost hero of our Grecian bands,
By fate appointed Ilion to destroy)
Woo's for his wife, and hopes for your consent.
What other boon have you from heav'n to
wish?

'Tis true; that long suspended by a calm—
But ha! what tears gush from your royal
eyes!

Weep you for the loss of young Orestes?
Your queen expir'd, or Iphigenia dead?

AGAMEMNON.

Thou shalt not die; I never will consent.

ARCAS.

Dread fir——

AGAMEMNON.

—— Thou know'st three moons are now
elaps'd

Since by this calm, which still detains us here,
We were impeded in our course to Troy.

Struck at the portent, I summon'd Calchas
To learn the cause. He to Diana's shrine
(The goddess here ador'd) devout repair'd.

But O! what racking agonies I felt,
When he brought answer back, that the pure
blood

Of Iphigenia sacrific'd— (my child!)
Was the price destin'd for the fall of Troy.

ARCAS.

To sacrifice your child!——

AGAMEMNON.

Ev'n so, good Arcas.

Urg'd by ambition, and Ulysses' wiles,
Gainst nature's voice I did indeed consent.—
But then what scheme, what artifice to use,
To draw the daughter from the mother's arms!

K.

All would prove vain; 'till in Achilles' name
To wed the princess hither, she's invited,
With Clytemnestra to behold the rites.

ARCAS.

Think you, sir, the haughty proud Achilles
Will tamely bear to have his name abus'd.

AGAMEMNON.

He then was far from Aulis and from me,
His father Peleus' realm from hostile troops
To guard; we b'liev'd so glorious an exploit
Would fill up all his soul; nor let him think
Of us, till that were over; which some time
Must keep him occupied: but his dread
sword

What pow'r can long resist? At his approach
Far fled the foe.—He march'd, he saw, he
vanquish'd;

And to our camp did yesterday return.
Guess my confusion;—but that is not all.—
A father's feelings for a fav'rite child
Harrow my heart, nor can my eyes know rest.
Sure heav'n can't countenance a crime like this.
'Tis only meant to try, how I should bear,
Submissive to its will, so dire a blow,

But thou chos'n confident of what I feel,
 Fly with this letter, intercept their coming;
 On that depends my Iphigenia's life —
 Join with the contents which I have written;
 Tell 'em Achilles, lukewarm in his love,
 Defers to wed 'till Troy be overthrown. —
 If she to Aulis come, she dies. — Ulysses,
 Calchas, and the assembled Greeks, will all
 Demand her virgin blood. — Speed, Arcas,
 speed,
 Save her from them; and from a father's
 weakness.

ARCAS.

With wings of zeal, I'll execute your will.

[Exit.

AGAMEMNON.

A I R.

Say, Diana, goddess bright,
 Can you such an act endure,
 As to shock your heav'nly sight
 With blood, royal, chaste and pure.

But hark! — a noise, as of approaching feet. —
 Achilles, Gods! — with him fell Ulysses.

K 2

S C E N E II.

AGAMEMNON, ACHILLES, ULYSSES.

AGAMEMNON.

Amazing, sir, the conquest you have made!
 With victory you march'd against the foe,
 And (fame your herald) now return to Aulis,
 Lesbos, the strongest city that's allied
 To perjur'd Troy, you vanquish'd in your way,
 To save your native Thessaly from havoc.
 Exploits like these, to you are but amusements.

ACHILLES.

May heav'n, great monarch, friendly to our
 wishes,

Soon open to my sword a nobler field
 For glorious deeds.—But first let me express
 The joy with which my raptur'd bosom glows,
 On hearing a report, which glads my soul,
 That I'm to wed your daughter, and that soon,
 Ev'n here in Aulis Hymen will unite us,
 And render me the happiest of men.

AGAMEMNON.

Who told you, prince, that Iphigenia comes?

ACHILLES.

Why thus alarm'd? Can such news then
bode ill?

AGAMEMNON.

[aside to Ulysses.]

Think you he knows the stratagem we've us'd?

ULYSSES.

Not without reason Agamemnon wonders,
Illustrious hero, that while adverse heav'n
Opposes our intent, and th' angry gods
Are, by th' effusion of most precious blood,
To be prevail'd on to espouse our cause;
You think of nothing but the joys of love,
And clasping Iphigenia in your arms.

ACHILLES.

My deeds among Troy's sons shall soon de-
clare,

Who pants for glory more, or thou, or I;
I born of Thetis, thou Laertes' son.

I leave to you political intrigues,

Or task inglorious of consulting entrails,

And slaughter'd victims, why the winds are
dumb.

But think not, fir, [to Agam.] the nuptials
 I follicit,
 Will in the leaft abate my thirft of fame.
 No—the few hours I may here give to love,
 Troy fhall repay with meafure of revenge.

AGAMEMNON.

Why, cruel heav'n, debar our way to Troy?
 Have I then feen fo many heroes met,
 Put to lament their difappointed hopes,
 And all, with fhame opprefs'd, return to Greece.

ULYSSES.

What have I heard our fov'reign fay !

ACHILLES.

Great king,
 You mean not fure as you have fpoke !

AGAMEMNON.

Too true :
 Heav'n's partial favour has for Troy declar'd,
 By various prefages in its behalf.

ACHILLES.

What various prefages ? I've heard of none !

AGAMEMNON.

Remember, fir, concerning thy own life,
 What in clear terms the oracle foretold.

ACHILLES.

I do remember well the fates' decree,
 As by the answer to my mother given,
 That I enjoy a short, but glorious life,
 Or without fame drag on a chain of years.
 The choice I've made shall now be crown'd
 with love;
 And then from Troy new laurels shall I reap,
 Or, if there fall, my fame will ever flourish.

A I R.

The Trojan dames, with plaintive cries,
 Shall oft repeat my name;
 While, from their wounded, groans arise,
 And give me deathless fame.

S C E N E III.

AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES.

O, what a cruel conflict tears my breast!

ULYSSES.

Is it Achilles can have wrought this change?

AGAMEMNON.

Nor he, nor Ajax, Diomed, nor all

The kings, combined in this war 'gainst Troy,
Could Agamemnon force to change resolves.

ULYSSES

What must I now conclude these smother'd
sighs,
And speech ambiguous, can portend? has then
One night o'erturn'd the work of many days?

AGAMEMNON.

Not so, Ulysses; but my heart can't b'lieve,
That gracious heaven commands to slay a
child.

ULYSSES,

I know not Agamemnon, in these words.
Has not th' avow'd interpreter of Gods,
Calchas, to whom the will of heav'n is known,
Declar'd in terms, that leave no room to
doubt?

AGAMEMNON.

Perplex'd and intricate are heav'nly mandates,
And oft superior to the reach of mortals.

ULYSSES.

Remember, sir, you owe your child to Greece.
Your word is giv'n.—Why did I say to
Greece?

To your own house's fame, you owe her
blood.

Is't not t' avenge the insult it receiv'd.

The Grecian kings assemble on this shore.

Who call'd us hither? You, now rais'd above

Your fellow sovereigns, their chief elect.

Shall it be said our gen'ral's first command

Was to dismiss so great a league inglorious,

And shrink supinely from the task of honour;

Turning our backs on victory, that wooes

To certain conquest and immortal fame.

AGAMEMNON.

You talk it nobly, sir; but were your son,

Telemachus, like Iphigenia, doom'd;

Were you to see him at the altar plac'd,

The sacred fillet round his temples bound,

His bosom bar'd for th' executive blow,

Like me you'd doubt the oracle's decree,

And, to protect, rush between him and Cal-
chas.

DUETTO.

AGAMEMNON.

Behold my child, breathless lying,
 What plaints, what tears, what groans!
 View a wretched mother fighting;
 Such precious blood a people moans.
 Let a father's feelings move you.

ULYSSES.

Behold proud Troy, vanquish'd lying,
 What plaints, what tears, what groans!
 View a prostrate people fighting,
 There's martial music in their moans.
 Let a hero's feelings prove you.

AGAMEMNON.

Be't so, our royal promise to devote
 My child is giv'n; let unrelenting fate
 Have the completion of its dire decree.
 But if my Iphigenia's better stars
 Prevent her coming to unhallow'd Aulis,
 Then be it constru'd in the princess' favour,
 That heaven has chang'd, and thirsts not
 for her blood,

What sprightly sounds invade my startled ear?

[A warlike symphony is heard at a distance ; Clytemnestra and Iphigenia are drawn forward in a triumphal car, attended by Grecian women, and the guards, who receive them on their entrance to the camp.]

My queen and daughter in the camp arriv'd !
Gods, 'tis too much : I cannot bear their sight,
And fly with horror from an interview.

S C E N E IV.

ULYSSES, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA,
and the CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Not the fam'd Helen, won by Paris,
As beauteous Iphigenia fair is.
And now she comes to wed Achilles ;
Of gods consenting such the will is.

[While the chorus sing, Clytemnestra
and Iphigenia descend from the car,
assisted by the Grecian women.]

ULYSSES.

Advance, bright dames ; let not the pomp
of war,
Or fight unusual of an army fright ye.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My eyes in vain for Agamemnon seek ;
He should be first to meet us on arriving.

IPHIGENIA.

Some luckless accident detains him from us.

ULYSSES.

The weighty cares attendant on his rank,
May for some moments keep him from your
fight.

Mean while do you, fair Iphigenia, come,
And shew your beauty to the Grecian troops,
As a kind star, propitious to our league.

CHORUS.

Not the fam'd Helen, won by Paris,
As beauteous Iphigenia fair is.
And now she comes to wed Achilles ;
Of gods consenting such the will is.

One of the CHORUS.

As the bright morning star pervades,
 Of leafy groves, the verdant shades ;
 So, in the midst of Grecian arms,
 Beam kindly Iphigenia's charms.

[The songs are intermixed with dances,
 consisting of Grecian women and
 soldiers.

Another of the CHORUS.

Hail, happy mother, happy sire,
 Still blest be that auspicious morn ;
 The princess smil'd as she was born ;
 For her our zealous vows conspire.

Two of the CHORUS.

Achilles, first of human race,
 What a sweet treasure you'll embrace !
 While all her beauties vie'd by night,
 She yields you rapturous delight.

The CHORUS.

Not the fam'd Helen, won by Paris,
As beauteous Iphigenia fair is.
And now she comes to wed Achilles;
Of gods consenting such the will is.

A DANCE.

A C T. II.

The theatre represents a colonade, through
which gardens are seen.

S C E N E I.

AGAMEMNON alone.

What stroke of adverse fortune has contriv'd
That faithful Arcas should mistake his way?
In what have I deserv'd the wrath of heav'n?
To me, this day is big with misery.

I hear Ulysses, Calchas, Menelaus
Demand, both in the name of Greece and
heav'n,

My child for victim — She comes — What a
meeting!

Hold heart — I fain would shun her, but I
can't.

S C E N E II.

AGAMEMNON, IPHIGENIA.

Why, sir, avoid the presence of your child?
There was a time you would not slight me thus.

What mighty cares have from me wean'd
your heart?

As duty urg'd, I yielded to the queen,
The first occasion of embracing you ;
Now, in my turn, I hope to share that fa vour.

AGAMEMNON.

Come to your father's arms, never more
fond.

IPHIGENIA.

Transporting news!—My bosom bounds with
joy !

What extacy, to see you now supreme,
O'er all the Grecian sovereigns here assembled !

AGAMEMNON.

Your innocence deserves a better father.

IPHIGENIA.

A better cannot be ; for which, kind heaven
Receives my constant and most grateful thanks.

AGAMEMNON [aside.]

How ! let her know the secret of her fate.

IPHIGENIA.

There's something lab'ring in your breast ;
those sighs

You fain would smother, but confirm it
more.

'Tis with anxiety you look on me.

Are we from Argos come without your order?

AGAMEMNON.

Alas ! mistake me not. Your father's eyes
With the same wonted tenderness behold you.
But such eventful changes have ta'en place,
The joy of seeing you is dash'd with sorrow.

IPHIGENIA.

Forget a moment your superior rank
In a child's presence — be my father still,
Nor blush to see me happy in your kindness.
'Tis said, sir, that a solemn sacrifice
By Calchas, to the heavenly powers, anon
Is to be made.

AGAMEMNON.

Heart-rending question !

IPHIGENIA.

Will you indulge me to be present, sir,
And join the gen'ral pray'r for your success ?
The Greeks would wonder not to see me there.

AGAMEMNON.

Good heaven !

L

IPHIGENIA.

You speak not, sir!

AGAMEMNON.

Child, you'll be there.

D U E T T O.

IPHIGENIA.

Perish the Trojan cause of all your grief.

AGAMEMNON.

Conquest, to pain like mine, brings no relief.

IPHIGENIA.

Why not? explain to me this hidden woe.

AGAMEMNON.

For your lov'd sake, I cannot more relate.

IPHIGENIA.

Ye guardian pow'rs of Greece, protect my
fire.

AGAMEMNON.

Now, cruel Gods, relent in her behalf.

[Both together.]

Perish the Trojan cause of all our grief.

S C E N E III.

IPHIGENIA [alone.]

This cold reception of a father chills me.
 What can I gather from those low'ring looks,
 Those half-form'd words, deep sighs, and
 starting tears?

Alas ! how different from what I hop'd,
 Has our cold meeting been ? Leaving Argos,
 I fancied I should see my father haste
 To joyfully embrace us as we came ;
 And with him, as th' attendants on his greatness,
 Ajax, and Diomed, and Menelaus,
 And Thetis' son, the bravest of them all,
 Achilles, my betroth'd — by all neglected :
 I'm left alone ; my father even shuns me.
 What can have caus'd such consternation ?
 Say, virgin goddess, in this clime rever'd,
 If e'er displeasing hath my worship prov'd ;
 Or if impure, the sacrifice I made.

S C E N E IV.

IPHIGENIA, CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah daughter, under what unhappy star
 Came we from Argos to ill boding Aulis?
 With what indiff'rence has the king receiv'd
 us!

IPHIGENIA.

The cares of state weigh heavy on his mind,
 His anxious thoughts to carry on the war
 For crushing Troy, usurp his whole regard;
 And for awhile make tenderness subside.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No;—'tis some other cause, to me unknown,
 But which, ere long, I'll learn; I'll draw't
 from Arcas:

That faithful slave, by Tyndarus, my father,
 To me was giv'n, whom I to Agamemnon
 Have resign'd—But what delays Achilles?
 Invited in his name, we're hither come.
 No intervening conquest can detain him.
 From Hector, Priam, and from Troy's proud
 walls,

We're by the sea divided — the prince asks
Your hand in marriage, as a just reward
Of all the Trojan warriors he shall slay ;
And yet he comes not — it is wond'rous all.

IPHIGENIA.

Our hapless race is doom'd to new disasters.

A I R.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Though hemm'd in by troops, and a woman,
I'll know
T'efface an affront by a most vengeful blow.
Nor sov'reign, nor prince, shall unpunish'd
remain,
If to our high station they offer a stain.

IPHIGENIA.

Here comes Achilles—wrongly he's accus'd.

SCENE V.

IPHIGENIA, CLYTEMNESTRA, ACHILLES.

[Achilles is followed by soldiers crowned
with laurel ; Lesbian slaves, of both sexes,
carrying trophies, vases, and other spoils
taken from the enemy.]

ACHILLES.

Hail, princeſs ! Agamemnon's beauteous
child ;

On thee alone my happineſs depends.

And may th' exploits, which I am doom'd
t'achieve

Againſt Troy's chiefs, inſure me all your love.

[turns to Clytemneſtra.]

Nor will my mother, Thetis, tho' divine,

Bluſh, Clytemneſtra's ſiſter to be call'd,

The queen and conſort to the king of kings.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Your words inſpire me with the pureſt joy ;

And may my daughter crown your love with
heirs,

That will riſe equal to their father's fame.

IPHIGENIA.

Whatever be the lot fate has prepar'd

For Iphigenia, 'tis her pride, her boaſt,

T'have rivall'd glory in Achilles' heart.

ACHILLES.

Deign t'accept theſe ſpoils obtain'd at Leſbos,

The first my valour has acquir'd. [to the Lesbians] Captives,
Pay homage to your mistress, and to mine.

CHORUS of captives.

Lesbos, to bold Achilles yields,
He sometimes will sweet thralldom prove;
The princess' arms prefer'd to shields.
Be ever sung the pow'r of love.

CHORUS of Greeks.

This happy hero soon will twine
With Mars's laurel, Hymen's wreath,
Around his helmet known to shine,
In the resistless scene of death.

One of the CHORUS of captives.

How, from their banks, the shepherd's joy,
Where flocks no more their care employ,
Will Xanthus, and Simois' flood,
Be by Achilles dy'd in blood?
While adverse gods rage on the plain,
And slaughter with her horrid train.

One of the CHORUS of Greeks.

Thus the kind hospitable pow'r,
Will just and ample vengeance take
On the vile swain of Ida's bow'r,
Who broke all laws for Helen's sake.

ALL TOGETHER. 7

Lesbos, to bold Achilles yields,
He sometimes will sweet thraldom prove;
His princess' arms prefer'd to shields.
Be ever sung the pow'r of love.

A C T III.

An apartment in the palace.

S C E N E I.

AGAMEMNON.

A I R.

Sweet hope, best gift of heav'n to cheer
 Desponding mortals in their woe,
 Or gild the gloomy shades of fear,
 And black despair to overthrow.
 You raise the peasant to a throne ;
 Do not my pious vow disown.

Let the fell monsters who delight in blood,
 Ascribe their savage nature to the gods.
 I can't think heav'n commands atrocious
 crimes ;

Nay, I'm determin'd to consult its will,
 No more impos'd on by designing priests.
 Too long the ear of Greece hath been deceiv'd
 By such, who're like ourselves to error prone.
 A mob implicit raises them to pow'r ; —

And yet, why thus reluctant to proceed?
 If th'oracle demands my child — she dies.
 Ulysses comes; I tremble lest he chide.

S C E N E II.

AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Now learn the friendly effort I have made,
 To win stern Calchas to approve your wish;
 Who, first, indignant at my offer mild,
 Exclaim'd—Is our religion scorn'd? By whom?
 Our chief, who should the first example give,
 Of due obedience to the gods decree;
 Else, must we never hope to conquer Troy.

AGAMEMNON.

Imperious, haughty priest, whose tow'ring
 pride
 Would fain usurp supreme authority;
 And lord it over all the kings of Greece,
 By his false prophecies, and juggling dreams.
 His tongue, ill-omen'd to Atreus' house,
 Ne'er yet aught pleasing to our ears foretold;
 Nor hath he done a deed good men would
 praise,

ULYSSES.

I thought, as soon I should from Paris gain,
 Helen to be return'd to Menelaus,
 As your admiffion to the sacred temple.
 But I fuch pow'rful arguments have urg'd
 For fire, for daughter, for your patriot cares,
 And homage to the gods (their will made
 known)
 That forc'd him to relent—let's thither now,
 And the fame gods, who fir'd me in your
 caufe,
 Will to yourfelf declare th'award of heav'n.

S C E N E III.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA, AGAMEM-
 NON, ULYSSES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stop, fir, unfold what myftery contriv'd.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis now no time to ask ; I muft be gone
 To learn what deftiny the gods intend us.

S C E N E IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas, my child ! your father flies our sight,
 He's gone to hasten some disastrous act :
 Hence, fault'ring words, and so much grief.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah, me !

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You know not all your sorrows yet.

IPHIGENIA.

What means the queen ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This note by Arcas giv'n,
 But now, into my hand, imparts, the king
 Had sent us orders to return to Argos.

IPHIGENIA.

How ! not to hasten our arrival here ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And the pretext was, that Achilles' will
 Was to defer his nuptials, till fall'n Troy

Should yield to you its conqueror renown'd.
Alas ! the purport was to sacrifice thee.

IPHIGENIA.

Good heav'n ! —

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Arcas mistook his way — Ruin !

IPHIGENIA.

Have I been born for such an hapless end ?
In public, sacrific'd before the Greeks !
Cruel deceivers ! how they lur'd my hopes
On a triumphal car, thro' Aulis' streets,
To light the torches for the rites of hymen.
I was intended for Achilles' bride,
Now I'm devoted to untimely death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

It shall not be, your mother will oppose,
And snatch you from th'assassinating hands
Of parent—Brave Achilles, cruel too,
Shall join in my resentment, to chastise
A plot, thus varnish'd in that prince's name.
It makes him sharer in the monstrous crime ;
A crime, which he'll not easily forgive.

IPHIGENIA.

Ah ! be not so incens'd against my fire.
 The letter proves he meant to save my life,
 By his commanding our return to Argos.
 Perhaps, he yet may some expedient find,
 To save me from impending destiny :
 He's here all pow'rful, and he loves his daughter.
 But with what eyes can I revisit Argos ?
 I, who thence parted 'midst acclaiming
 crowds,
 'Midst festive music, and a dance of joy ;
 I, that was going to espouse Achilles,
 To be acknowledg'd queen of Pthia's realm ;
 That there made happy in Achilles' love,
 I should a race of heroes give to Greece,
 Who would not prove unworthy of their fire.
 But such vain thoughts adieu — now welcome
 fate !
 I will resign ; and without murm'ring die,
 Since so my father and the gods resolve,
 Nor shall there be a cause to blame my con-
 duct.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Helen, how fatal to the race of Atreus ?

Shame of thy sex, and a reproach to Greece,
 Thy baneful beauty proves thus kindling war,
 Between the pow'rs of Europe and of Asia.—
 What tears you make me shed? Was't not
 enough

To have dishonour'd the chaste nuptial bed
 Of Menelaus, but a brother's child
 Must for your wantonness be sacrific'd?

IPHIGENIA.

Unless you can command your sorrow more,
 I well foresee, more mischiefs will ensue;
 Should you attempt to interpose, 'twere vain:
 Such disobedience to a husband's will,
 E'en could you gain on him, would nought
 -avail,

Because, he'd, too, rebel against the gods:
 But, if Achilles' sword should interfere
 To rescue Iphigenia from such woe,
 Discord among the Grecian chiefs would rage,
 Order must fly the camp, and heav'n alone
 Can tell, how such a mutiny would end.

A I R.

Now let me end the cares of life,
 Nor be expos'd to longer strife;
 But let my death prevent the woe,
 That ready seems on Greece to flow.

S C E N E V.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

So good, so mild, so excellent a child,
 Can heav'n command a father to destroy?
 No — fell ambition, nature's surest foe,
 That prompts, and not the gods, to such a
 crime.

A I R.

I cannot yet discern
 That the decree is truth,
 The whole I'll strive to learn,
 And thereby save her youth.

[The theatre represents the interiour view
 of the temple of Diana.]

AGAMEMNON, ULYSSES, CALCHAS,

CHORUS of priests,

CHORUS of priests.

'Twere a vain proof of mortal pride,

To think heav'n's will to put aside.

One of the CHORUS.

The orders which from gods emanate,

Engrav'd on adamant remain.

Two of the CHORUS.

Th' eternal tables of their will,

Neither by time, nor human skill,

Can shew the least impression made,

Nor years, nor force can them invade.

[A part of the priests dance solemnly
around the altar of the goddess.

One of the CHORUS.

They rule th'events of night and day,

Shepherds and kings alike they sway.

All the CHORUS.

Behold Jove gives th'almighty nod,

Olympus trembles 'fore its god;

Our low world is to silence hush'd,

Left in his anger it be crush'd.

M

CALCHAS.

Thro' special favour, Agamemnon, learn,
 The goddesses here ador'd, a second time
 Now deigns, that you interrogate her shrine.

HALF-AIR.

Thou, goddess, sprung from mighty Jove,
 Who pleasant hills, sweet vales below,
 And bloomy woods, delight'ft to rove,
 O, pity a fond father's woe!

If all my pray'rs for Greece's good,
 And duteous immolations made
 You like — O! be not now withstood,
 But have your oracle obey'd.

Speak, goddess, claim your victim now, —
 While incredulity exists,
 Who, henceforth at your shrine will bow;
 Speak, goddess, speak, revenge your priests.

AGAMEMNON.

O! let her beauty, innocence, and youth,
 Her piety to heav'n, and chief to you,

Chaste goddess, object of my worship too,
Plead strong in Iphigenia's behalf.

[While Agamemnon speaks, a noise, as
of distant thunder, is heard, gradu-
ally encreasing.

CALCHAS.

Mortals attend ; the goddess means to speak.

The ORACLE.

If, Grecians, ye expect to land at Troy,
The blood of Iphigenia must be shed.

AGAMEMNON.

What cruel sounds to a fond father's ear.

CHORUS.

High heav'n's decrees ne'er know decay,
Shepherds and kings alike they sway.

Two of the CHORUS.

Where now the thousand ships combin'd,
That shadow'd all yon stretching shore ;
And warlike chariots, fleet as wind,
That cover'd plains? they're seen no more.

All the CHORUS.

To punish the reluctant mind
Of Agamemnon, has loud fate
Excited a tempestuous wind,
They're now all in a shatter'd state,

CALCHAS.

Sir, be advis'd, provoke not by delay :
Obey the oracle, lest ills ensue.

The CHORUS.

The orders which from gods emanate
Engrav'd on adamant remain.

CALCHAS.

Who'll profit most by such a sacrifice ?
Yourself ;—opens it not your road to glory ?
Victory beckons from the Trojan shore,
And bids you haste to reap a laurell'd harvest.
The Hellespont again will gladly foam
Beneath your ships, cheer'd by the sailors
shouts !
Ere long, will they return furcharg'd with
spoils—
Think, as you land in Greece, how crowds
on crowds
Beholding you from far, with peals of joy

Will welcome your approach, and sing your triumph.

These, sure, are motives to command respect
To that decree you've in the temple heard.

AGAMEMNON.

My heart's so full, words cannot find a way.

The CHORUS.

The orders which from gods emanate,
Engrav'd on adamant remain.
High heav'n's decrees ne'er know decay,
Shepherds and kings alike they sway.
Behold, Jove gives th'almighty nod,
Olympus trembles 'fore its god;
Our low world is to silence hush'd,
Left in his anger it be crush'd.

A C T. IV.

A gallery in the palace.

S C E N E I.

AGAMEMNON alone.

[The scene opens to pathetic music.]

Too plain I heard the oracle's decree.

"Grecians, if you expect to land at Troy,

"The blood of Iphigenia must be shed."

S C E N E II.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now, sir, we're met, tho' midst the din of
arms,

And crowding cares of your supreme command,

Let, sir, your queen's, a mother's voice be
heard.

My child and I have been seduc'd from Argos,
Hither to haste, that she might wed Achilles.

Then we are told, the prince has chang'd his
mind,
Nor will in marriage join, 'till Troy's o'er-
thrown ;
Yet he in person urges the espousal,
And will not hence depart on other terms.

AGAMEMNON.

The right's in me to rule my daughter's fate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I know it is, thou barb'rous, cruel father.
Why now dissemble? I have learn'd your plot.

AGAMEMNON.

Then the false Arcas has betray'd my secret.

IPHIGENIA.

No, royal sir, you have not been betray'd.—
When you'll command, I'm ready to obey.
My life is yours ; you'll take but what you
gave :

And you shall find I'll die a hero's daughter,
Nor will my bosom shrink from Calchas' knife.
However, if obedient innocence,
And full submission to the will of heav'n,
Were worthy of a better fate, my lot

M 4

Is hard indeed, from such inviting joys,
 To be thus prematurely torn, in life's
 Gay bloom ;—and, O Sir ! deign now to
 remember,

That the once lov'd, but now lost Iphigenia,
 First call'd you by the tender name of father;
 And in return you call'd her that of child.
 How many fond embraces have I felt!
 Me you've long destin'd for Achilles' bride,
 Because a hero worthy your alliance.
 And with what joy us'd I to hear recounted
 The various kingdoms ye were both to conquer.

I did not think the auspice of your triumphs
 Was to be fought in Iphigenia's blood.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis but too true ; nor can I yet conceive
 By what crime I've deserv'd the ire of heav'n.
 But you are nam'd, nor is't in mortal pow'r
 To elude its high behest : the murm'ring
 Greeks,
 By Calchas' tongue insatiate for your blood,
 Will mutiny, and execute by force
 What better were submitted to with mildness.

Long did I force myself to doubt, but now
 The oracle a second time has spoke.—
 Unlucky Arcas was dispatch'd to meet you,
 And interdict your coming to the camp.
 By that intent what dangers I provok'd,
 Both to our rank and realm, to Greece combin'd.

But heav'n thought otherwise, and from the
 path
 He should have ta'en, made faithful Arcas stray.
 Vain then, on my side, would prove all attempts.

The fatal hour is come ; when dying, shew
 The oracle's unjust, and you're my daughter.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou dost not, monster, now belye thy race ;
 Of the same blood with Atreus and Thyestes.
 Barbarian, canst thou thus condemn a child?—
 Next send her breathless corse for me to
 feast on ?

Have I then brought her hither to be butcher'd,
 And must I childless now return to Argos,
 By the same roads where flow'rs were strew'd
 before her ?

A I R.

Mist'd Greeks, touch not my child :
 The rash attempt you'll surely rue.
 Vain on oracles you build.
 With her kill her mother too.

S C E N E III.

ACHILLES, AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA,
 and IPHIGENIA.

ACHILLES.

Sir, I'm alarm'd at the report I've heard,
 And scarce can think it true; that in my name,
 From Argos hither Iphigenia call'd,
 Is in the temple to be sacrific'd.
 Have I then, sir, your instrument been made,
 To lure the princess from her native home,
 For an intent so horrid, and 'gainst nature ?

AGAMEMNON.

Those of my rank, for what they please to do,
 Are not accountable to inferiors.
 But, when the proper moment is arriv'd,
 You and all Greece shall learn my daughter's
 fate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Execrable tyrant!

ACHILLES.

Evasive king,

Too well I know the fate which you intend.

AGAMEMNON.

Why ask of me, what you already know?

ACHILLES.

Patience, ye gods!—Why ask?—Can your
heart own

So black, so impious a resolution.

But if it does—then think not that Achilles
Will be a tame spectator of thy crime.

His love, his honour, urge him to protect her.

IPHIGENIA.

Good heav'n, what mischiefs am I like to
cause!

Fatal dissension 'twixt my honour'd fire,
And the lov'd hero, I once hop'd to wed.
No, let me die, and put an end to all
The rising obstacles to certain glory:
Since 'tis decreed ye cannot land at Troy,
But thro' th' effusion of my hapless blood.

There let your valiant deeds make Trojan
dames,
In their lost sons and husbands rue my fall.
Tho' 'tis forbid that I shall be your bride,
Yet will our names be join'd thro' ages down,
And my death deem'd the source of all your
glory.

ACHILLES.

Talk not of dying while Achilles lives,
And that my eyes behold yon radiant sun.
With this good executive sword of mine,
The foremost of them all shall bite the ground,
Who'd arrogantly dare dispute my right.

AGAMEMNON.

Such menaces, and in our presence too,
Become thee not; nor will I suffer, prince.

ACHILLES.

Become me not! when Agamemnon dares
To wrong me in the tend'rest part, my love.
If thou'rt a king o'er kings, know I'm Achilles,
And that I've sworn your daughter shall not die.

AGAMEMNON.

And will you, prince, dispute a father's
pow'r?

ACHILLES.

Your pow'r of father is no more ; she's mine
By love, by promise mine ; was't not to wed
With Peleus' son, that she from Argos came ?

AGAMEMNON.

Implead the gods, who've otherwise ordain'd ;
Blame the whole camp, Ulysses, Menelaus,
Calchas, who're not so culpable as thou.

ACHILLES.

I culpable !

AGAMEMNON.

Yes thou, whose wild ambition
Was ever railing 'gainst th' opposing gods,
That here detain'd us. I the means propos'd
By which she might be sav'd, but you rejected ;
And that was to decline the war with Troy ;
You'd hear of nought but Ilium overturn'd.—
Now thither haste, her blood insures its fall.

ACHILLES.

Barbarian,—merciless, and bloody king,
What had Troy done to draw on my resentment ?

Thence no ships ever sail'd for Thessaly,
With hostile troops, our subjects to invade ;

Nor Phrygian ravishers have ever dar'd
 To carry off their wives in haughty triumph.
 Is't not for you that I've 'gainst Priam leagu'd,
 And fain would hasten his destruction, sir,
 That the foul stain of your illustrious line
 Might soon be wash'd away with Trojan blood?
 For Helen's crime must your chaste daughter
 perish?

And she the only change for an adulteress!
 Your daughter's mine, or I'll not move
 tow'rd Troy;
 Try then without me what your arms
 can do.

QUARTETTO.

AGAMEMNON.

Hence, part, be gone, we want thee not,
 Yet Troy shall tumble to the ground;
 To live inglorious be thy lot,
 'Mongst cowards will thy name be found.

ACHILLES.

Thou faithless king, provoke me not,
 Lest my sword fell thee to the ground;
 To be her fire's thy happy lot,
 Else 'mongst the slain thou now wert found.

IPHIGENIA.

O, prince ! if me you ever lov'd,
Be not thus with anger mov'd.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Merciless fate, must she expire ?
Oh ! yet more merciless her fire !

A L L.

By so barbarous a decree,
Immortal gods how wretched we !

S C E N E IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, IPHIGENIA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Your father's gone, and gives you up to fate.
O, my poor child, and are we thus to part !

IPHIGENIA.

O, sun ! thou chearing light to mortal eyes,
Soon Iphigenia will behold no more
Thy friendly beams.—I take my farewell view.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do not despond, Achilles' love will save thee,
And snatch thee from a tyrant father's pow'r.

IPHIGENIA.

O madam! in the name of all the gods,
 Persuade him not to risk his life for mine.
 Of what avail to feed illusive hopes?
 Diana is determin'd on her victim,
 And to oppose her will would fruitless prove.—
 No, for my country's good, I die resign'd.—
 O, why thus silent, and why flow these tears!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Have I not cause to weep, my child? My
 tongue,
 By grief oppress'd, denies its wanted use.

IPHIGENIA.

Instead of adding to, support my weakness.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah me! must I return alone to Argos,
 Without my child; and when I'm there ar-
 riv'd,
 In vain, to cheer my solitary walks,
 Shall I in fancy seek for Iphigenia.

IPHIGENIA.

Madam, once more have pity on your
 child,

Nor with such tender complaints unnerve me.—
There's one request I hope you'll not refuse.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If in my pow'r, I can refuse thee nothing.

IPHIGENIA.

Then do not, on account of my disaster,
Or by rent veil, torn, or dishevell'd locks,
Betray the least regret that I'm no more.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Of thee depriv'd, I never can return.

IPHIGENIA.

Comfort my fire, and Oh! upbraid him not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Your death must draw down vengeance on his
head.

IPHIGENIA.

My death's no crime of his; 'tis heav'n's
command;

The welfare of the Greeks forc'd his assent.

CHORUS of women.

As when cut down, the lilly fair,
Declined, lies with fading charms,
So with her bosom wounded, bare,
Will that bright nymph in death's cold arms.

N

Two of the CHORUS.

Ah ! if so sweet a princess die,
There's no compassion from on high.

IPHIGENIA.

I shall be ever fam'd in story ;
The Greeks to me will owe their glory.

One of the CHORUS.

Deserving of a longer date,
She came to wed, but meets her fate.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If any gods befriend our cause,
Oh ! rouse Achilles to take arms.
Now the destructive sword he draws,
And shields young Iphigenia's charms.

One of the CHORUS.

Deserving of a longer date,
She came to wed, but meets her fate.

IPHIGENIA.

I shall be ever fam'd in story ;
To me the Greeks will owe their glory.

CHORUS.

As when cut down, the lilly fair,
Declined, lies with fading charms,
So with her bosom wounded, bare,
Will that bright nymph in death's cold arms.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

The Tent of Achilles.

ACHILLES.

What urgent cause brings Clytemnestra hither ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I blush not, prince, to throw me at your feet,
And beg your help for Iphigenia's life,
Your lately promis'd bride ; to death condemn'd,
Unless you snatch her from the pressing woe.

ACHILLES.

And is it thus you know Achilles' spirit,
That you can now my sacred promise doubt ?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The horrid sacrifice they now prepare.

ACHILLES.

Let's waste no time in words superfluous.

A I R.

By my chaste love, and thirst of fame,
 This sword shall reek with Grecian blood.
 For ever die Achilles' name,
 If in her cause I be withstood

S C E N E II.

[The theatre represents, on one side, a wood, and the temple of Diana; on the opposite side is seen a part of the Grecian camp, the port of Aulis, and the fleet. Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Calchas, Ulysses, Arcas first appear; then Clytemnestra, priests, virgins consecrated to Diana, and attendant soldiers. They all advance from the bottom of the theatre to melancholy music.

CALCHAS.

Goddeſs, who gild the ſolemn night,
 While from thy orb mild beams do flow,
 May Greece find favour in thy fight,
 Let looſe the winds, and bid them blow.

CHORUS.

The victim take our vows do owe ;
 Let loose the winds, and bid them blow.

Part of the CHORUS.

Now Trojans, with the guilty pair,
 Mock at our fleet from their high tow'rs,
 But soon shall yield to black despair,
 All crush'd by Grecian pow'rs.

The CHORUS.

Goddeſs, the victim take we owe ;
 Let loose the winds, and bid them blow.

IPHIGENIA. [to Agam.]

I'm ready, ſir, and ſhall, without a groan,
 My life reſign, your glory to inſure,
 And make Greece triumph o'er the perjur'd
 foe.

Let none dare offer to lay hands on me ;
 I'll to the knife, unmov'd, my boſom bare.
 I mean to die a voluntary victim,
 In death triumphant, and the bane of Troy.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas, my child ! my eyes can ne'er behold.

[throws his cloak around his head.

Part of the CHORUS.

Such beauty, such undaunted spirit,
Should a more happy fortune merit.

Another part of the CHORUS.

Soon shall we land on Ilion's shore,
In spite of gods whom they adore.

The CHORUS.

Goddeſs, the victim take we owe,
Let looſe the winds, and bid them blow.

CALCHAS.

Attend, ye Greeks, hence hope a lucky omen.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Achilles not yet come, and Calchas' knife
Is ready drawn 'gainſt Iphigenia's breaſt. [aſide.

[Calchas having put his drawn knife in a
golden vaſe, crowns the victim ; and,
with a cup of conſecrated water in his
hand, advances towards the altar.

CALCHAS.

Thou goddess, daughter of immortal Jove,
Deign to accept young Iphigenia's blood.
For shedding it, be Pergamus our prey.

[The moment he is going to strike, a clash
of arms is heard, towards which all turn.]

CALCHAS continuing.

What sacrilegious mortals hither come,
And interrupt our sacrifice to heav'n?

The Last S C E N E.

Enter ACHILLES. DIANA at the same time
is seen in the air.

ACHILLES.

Behold Achilles, who demands his right.

DIANA.

Suspend your ire, O valiant son of Thetis!
And turn it tenfold 'gainst perfidious Troy.
May the great fire of all celestial pow'rs!
Forbid Achilles' wrath against the Greeks
Should rage, and so prevent the fall of Troy.
Now Iphigenia, as my prize, I claim.

[Diana disappears, and in the room of
Iphigenia is seen a doe panting and

bloody; Achilles raises his hands to
heaven.

CALCHAS.

A miracle!

CHORUS.

A miracle indeed!

CALCHAS.

The princess' blood appear'd of too much
worth,

To be effus'd in this our cause. The goddess
Takes her to herself, and henceforth to us
Indulgent, she will favour all our wishes.

Ye Grecian warriors, now for Troy prepare
Your hostile arms; the obstacle's remov'd.

[The noise of a rising wind is heard, the
sea thrown into agitation, and the ships
are all in motion.]

A CHORUS of sailors in the ships, is heard
from a distance.

The sea is rous'd, the billows rise,
The winds invite, and Troy's our prize.

CHORUS of soldiers on the fore part of the
theatre.

The winds invite, and Troy's our prize.

[After the two choruses, several times alternately sung, then

The full CHORUS of both.

Paris shan't long his crime enjoy ;

The winds invite ; now, now we steer
To punish him, and conquer Troy.
To injur'd Greece revenge is dear.

A DANCE of sailors.

A SHORT GLOSSARY OF CERTAIN TERMS USED IN THIS WORK.

ADAGIO, a slow tune.

AFFETTO AFFETTUOSO, means that kind of music, which is tender and moving.

ALLEGRO, a brisk, lively, gay, and pleasant style of music.

ARIA, a song, air, or tune.

ARIETTA, a little short song, a sonnet, or catch.

ANDAMENTO,	}	These are derived from the Italian word <i>andare</i> , to go, and signify that the notes (especially in the thorough basses) are to be played distinctly and slow, from a less to the greatest degree.
ANDANTE,		
ANDANTISSIMO,		

BALET, is of French origin, and signifies a succession of airs in all sorts of movements, whether brisk or slow, with which the dances agree, and are carried on as the strains or motions differ.

BRAVURA, is applied to whatever performance, instrumental or vocal, requires a spirited, lively, and impassioned execution.

CADENZA. Cadence, in modern music, is a certain conclusion of a song, or of the parts thereof, in many places of the piece; which is divided as it were into so many numbers or periods. The cadence is when the parts fall, or terminate on a chord or note, the ear seeming naturally to expect it; and is much the same in a song, as a period that closes the sense in a paragraph of discourse.

CANTABILE, } signify, the first, a piece of
CANTILENA, } melody well composed; and
 the second, a song.

CONTINUATA, in vocal music, means to continue or hold on a sound with an equal strength or manner, or to continue a movement in an equal degree of time all the way.

DESANT, is to run a division or variety upon one, two, or more given notes, with an instrument or voice.

DIATEMATIC, implies, according to the sense of the ancients, a simple interval, in opposition to a compound one, by them called a system.

FINALE, is the end or last note of a piece of music; but it more particularly means the close or last note of a tone or mode, by which it is distinguished from all others; sometimes the ends of airs.

HARMONY, is the agreeable effect of sounds, differing in acuteness, produced together.

MELODY, is the effect of sounds ranged and disposed in succession: so that melody

is the effect of a single voice or instrument; which distinguishes it from harmony, though they are often confounded.

OBLIGATO, signifies *for*, on purpose *for*, or necessary, as *duoi violini*, on purpose *for* two violins, and so of other instruments.

ORCHESTRA, is that part of a theatre where the musicians are placed.

PHONIC, comes from the Greek word *φωνη*, signifying voice or sound, and implies the doctrine or science of sound, called likewise *acoustics*.

PIANO, soft or sweet, or gently slow.

PRESTO, quick or fast; and gaily, without being rapid.

RIPIENO, signifies full; and is used in pieces of music in parts, to distinguish those parts that are played but now and then, from what fill up those that are played throughout the piece.

RITORNELLO, the burden, or the repetition

of the verses of a song at the end of each stanza. It means also, those symphonies played before the voices begin, by way of an introduction or prelude.

SVEGLIATO, a gay, brisk, lively manner of playing or singing.

SYMPHONY, signifies in music, a concert or consonance of several sounds agreeable to the ear, be they instrumental, or vocal, or both, and may be called harmony in general; yet some there are, who confine the meaning of symphony to instrumental music alone, and therefore say, that the *symphonies* of such an Opera were excellent, although the *recitativos* were abominable.

VIOLETTA, this term signifies the *triple viol*.

VIRTU, signifies a superiority of genius and talents; and by *virtuoso* is meant a person thus eminently endowed by nature and due cultivation; wherefore an excellent painter, able architect, &c. are

called *virtuosi*. But this denomination seems to be appropriated by the Italians in a more especial manner to eminent musicians ; and among them, rather to those who apply themselves to the theory than to the practice of that art. The term *virtuoso* is understood in a very different sense by the English !

F I N I S.



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